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# B Group no Shounen

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# Prologue

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It is said that people have to be appropriate for their status.

If there is a person given a large role, then there is a person given a small role as well. When you greatly step outside your role, there will be serious repercussions.

Seldom at times do things go smoothly, but it is the minority that understands so.

And it is largely influenced by student life.

No, that it is largely influenced by student life is questionable.

For instance, in the case of Middle and High School classes, as time passes in the class, groups start to be formed. When you look at the groups, although it is non-existent, it seems like each group has an invisible wall. If it is asked what kind of wall, it is simple, clearly, first comes appearance.

The boys who are cool and the girls who are cute often gather together.

In this case, there are people who can become part of the group even if their appearance is not great.

If it's asked what kind of person they are, even when their appearance isn't that good, they are good at chatting, possibly studying, excel and are talented in sports, in other words humans that specialize in a talent of some kind, most numerous though, are cheerful people with the ability to make people laugh.

The group where these people gather will stand out inside their class, they may even stand out within the school. And then there is the group that does not stand out as much, additionally there is a group that stands out even less. When you simplify it, the ones who stand out in class and school are Group A (Conspicuous), the ones who don't stand out are Group C (Non-conspicuous) then, the ones in the middle are Group B (Normal).

The wall described earlier is between these groups. People are sensitive to foreign bodies. It is difficult for the people who are in Group C to mix with those of Group B. If it's a short period it's not so bad, but being familiar over a long term is difficult.

However, it's not so troublesome when the case is reversed. Conceivably Group A may exist within Group B.

Of course exceptions exist as well. A, B and C come into contact regardless of relations, there are people who become friends with everyone with good intentions, those who belong to no group, those who associate only with a particular friend, and those who are always alone.

To begin with, people can be considered as having A, B and C mind-sets.

As for these walls, once class begins and as time passes, it can be felt with the body and is naturally made.

Following these considerations, there is a boy who belongs to Group B.

The boy's name is Sakuragi Ryou. Age is 16 and in second year of high school. Wearing unfashionable black rim glasses, slightly short hair with wax applied so as not to show bed hair.

Medium height, though the body is firm, it doesn't show over his clothes. Features are slender with a prominent nose and good looks. Probably because of the glasses and hairstyle the features don't stand out. In other words, when glanced at, he looks like an ordinary boy who can be found anywhere.

He- Ryou does not show large dissatisfaction towards his high school life, but rather is satisfied with high school life calmly flowing by.

His middle school life relations were with the so-called Group A. In Group A, he was enclosed by conspicuous friends. Surrounded by bad company and used, it is difficult to say he was calm. He at least wanted to spend high school life slowly, studying for tests frantically, without bad friends, a high school life which doesn't deviate.

And so with great effort he entered high school. Because he is not disturbed it can be spent calmly, he will not tread down the same path twice. The Group A people must be avoided as much as possible.

As long it was not Group A, Ryou doesn't mind which group he is in, but he actually would rather be in Group C. However the conversations and hobbies of the Group C classmates are not engaged with, so naturally company began to be kept with Group B.

By himself he looks over the class. A, B, C, the divides can be seen, however to the end, he doesn't associate with A people. It's a viewpoint so not to be manipulated.

Commonly referred to as 'high school debut', during the time of middle school, Group B and C people express their wanting to take advantage of entering high school so as to enter into Group A, however for him it was the opposite.

You could call it 'reverse high school debut'.

Ryou who accomplished this 'reverse high school debut' and is a part of Group B, is especially careful so as not attract attention. And so this position without presence was obtained and a quiet year in high school was spent. In this one year Ryou spends it in high school how he chose, convinced that his choice was not wrong and promised absolutely not to let go of it.

Though Ryou made a pledge not to do things requiring great effort, a turning point comes towards him.

Ryou thinking back later was wondering if the turning point of his high school life was a plus, or a minus. Although in a very much troublesome place, he could not come to a conclusion.

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## Chapter 1 – A Changing Encounter

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On the way back from school one day, struck by the early summer sunlight of May, the peaceful, ordinary daily life forcibly came to a close. Occasionally Ryou would return home by himself taking a detour through a back street where almost no students pass through. Facing towards the station a commotion was suddenly heard. Looking towards the vacant lot 50 metres long on all sides, a girl wearing the same uniform as himself could be seen alone surrounded by three boys wearing another school's uniform, some kind of courting in this place was being witnessed.

Ryou, who observed the troublesome situation momentarily, was deciding whether or not to leave quickly. If he heard afterwards that the girl was injured, he thought that it would leave a bad aftertaste. Profoundly, as a result of being briefly worried, he decided to intervene if it became dangerous and decided to watch the girl stealthily from cover.

Judging from the appearance of the situation, a boy from another school confessed to the girl and the girl declined. Ryou saw the situation where the girl was still being strongly approached. Though it is a little far away, if ears are strained it can be heard.

“Say, its fine isn’t it? We came here with much effort just to hear ‘sorry’, yes, let’s not say goodbye yet, just keep us company going out for some tea”  
“Yes of course, it will be comforting, so come with us for a bit so our feelings can come to an end. It’s the best for you after all, wouldn’t refusing a confession you received leave a bad aftertaste? So let’s associate for just a little bit”

The men make advances towards the girl while smirking. Ryou knits his eyebrows towards the excessive and one-sided flirting, earnestly hoping the girl can safely make her own way through this place, for the sake of his own peace.

Then the girl in a fed up tone said to the men.

“That has nothing to do with me, you came unreservedly of your own accord. As for the reason why I must keep you company, why would I think so?”

Though the girl’s complaint was indeed justifiable, in this situation, Ryou considered that it might have an adverse effect.

The men while seemingly irritated, gripped the girl’s arm.

“Now, listen here. All you have to do is come for a little bit”

“Hey, let go!”

The girl puts up resistance to her arm being gripped, and swings the bag held in her hand. The bag hits the face of the man holding the girl’s arm making him bend backwards. The arm which was gripped was parted from but the girl was threatened immediately.

“That hurt!”

“What, you gripped it so suddenly ..., hey, let go!”

A man other than the one who was shaken off, catches the girl’s arm while shaking his head, appearing to be very disappointed.

“Haa, This fellow I truly want to keep company with. What do you do? Do we accompany her back to your home?”

While saying so, the man gripping the arm floats a cruel smile, and looks towards a man, who grins in agreement.

“That sounds good, then, let’s go to my home!”

“Wai, that’s not a joke! Let go! Let go now!”

“This....., be reasonable and behave yourself!”

“kyah!”

The girl resists to the end and swings her bag with her free arm, while resisting, suddenly the man thrusts away the arm which was held and the girl falls on her backside.

“Ow.....! What are you doing! I’ll call the police!”

“Good, if called out then wouldn’t this be seen”

Though the girl retorts back strongly, the fear in her voice couldn't be concealed. Ryou who heard that voice sighed.

If an ordinary man goes and helps, it's certain that it would be regarded as the girl's hero. That is to say, if he moves up front and help he will certainly be a hero.

So, why then, did Ryou not go help despite being able to help the girl at any time? The reason not to help is because after helping, tomorrow the girl who was helped would talk to her friends, and he is concerned about becoming the topic of a rumor.

Ryou was unsure about becoming a hero now, as it was important to maintain his position. While the girl was swinging her bag around, Ryou was hoping she would run away, however things likely won't turn out so well. In the end, though troublesome, he had to move to rescue the girl and end this useless panic. A sigh of regret was let out.

Ryou goes out from the cover and picked up a stone by his feet. Facing forward towards the girl, Ryou casually threw it towards a man in front. The stone drew a beautiful parabola and splendidly hit the forehead of the man it was aimed at.

The man who was hit by the stone crouched down in pain holding his forehead.

"What, you!"

After the man was suddenly hit by the stone, the three men were dumbfounded and looked to their right towards Ryou and shouted. The men and girl on the left hand side were attracted towards Ryou.

Ryou saw the girl turned around, despite the distance could tell she was a splendid cute girl. While calmly thinking so, Ryou and the girl who became aware of him matched eyes. Ryou made a gesture with his right hand, moving towards the right. Ryou's meaning was "Escape that way".

The girl realizing the meaning behind Ryou's gesture nods and quickly stands up and moves in the direction Ryou indicated. She used the opportunity to run away while the men were still taken aback and glancing sideward because of Ryou's appearance.

“Wai... you! Don’t move there!”

The men carelessly overlooked the girl that ran away, seemingly further increasing in anger they faced towards Ryou.

Ryou understood that the attention of the men went from the girl to himself and let out a breath of relief. These guys are simpler than Ryou thought and he chuckled expressionlessly.

The men go towards Ryou who reflexively looked a bit relieved, holding their fists up approaching where he is.

Ryou with composure watched the punch which could be dodged, but doesn’t move from the spot. When it is confirmed that a man had entered the range of his kick, without any preliminary movement that could be sensed, with a flash, the outer of his foot was thrust into the man’s solar plexus. The man, who received Ryou’s counter in the form of his foot, floats a facial expression of anguish and fell to his knees, letting out painful breathing sounds.

“Huh!?”

Another one saw that instantaneous exchange and raised his voice wildly, with an expression that he can’t believe the scene he just witnessed. Suddenly using his foot to break from running, he escaped from the very limit of Ryou’s range at the last moment. Ryou clicks his tongue inwardly, after matching his line of sight with the man, he quickly looks behind him and shouts

“Over here! Come quickly!”

The man was startled but became confused when he turned his head back and there was no-one there. Before he realized that he was tricked, Ryou cut down the distance while the man was looking back and struck him with a roundhouse kick to the same solar plexus as just now.

“Thank you for your simplicity”

Ryou mutters towards the man with a truly joyful smile as he collapses with an anguished expression. Looking towards the man who the stone was first thrown at who was absentminded and in a crouching posture.



Ryou confirmed he was the only one remaining and with composure walked towards him. He realizes that Ryou is coming and stand up in a panic. The memory of being hit by the stone was recalled and he speaks sharply while pointing towards his forehead.

“You, do you know what you’ve done!?”

The voice was strange as a bit of fear began to invade and merge with his angry tone. Ryou ignores the man’s caustic words as they go in the one ear and out the other as he slowly draws near the man expressionlessly.

The man held more and more fear towards such a Ryou, he instinctively felt so while holding up his fists he faced Ryou. The moment he entered into range he was struck by the outer of Ryou’s foot into his solar plexus and just like the other two, he collapsed with an anguished expression.

Up to now, not even two minutes have passed since Ryou first threw the stone. One might say it is an indicator of Ryou’s brilliant and unobjectionable skill.

Ryou confirms that the men had fainted and began to search the uniform pockets of the men. In the places that he was looking, from the breast pocket a student notebook and a wallet and cellphone are taken out of the pants pocket. Feeling a sign from behind, he smiled wryly that he forgot.

As for Ryou, if the girl runs back as it is, wouldn’t his presence in class be found out. He was hoping that this could be finished without becoming a rumor. As is expected that may be too convenient for him. As he was thinking so, the girl he was assuming about appeared.

To leave the person who helped and runaway alone, because anyone would think there will be resistance, it couldn’t be helped that she looked back towards Ryou. She became speechless and stiff towards the situation that was completely unexpected.

The girl who looked back earlier was slender but not too thin, hands and feet which weren’t large. Good looks that can’t help but make you unintentionally turn around regardless of gender. The light brown hair hanging below her shoulder has a slight wave. She is a special A within school, no a beautiful girl of super-special A. The one standing there was his school’s idol.

Ryou suddenly looks back and the beautiful girl of super-special A shows a slightly surprised expression. He immediately regroups his mind and quickly bows his head in apology.

“I was saved. Thank you”

Hearing the girl's words, Ryou was taken aback thinking about how quickly she got over the situation. While his brain is moving at high speed he answered the girl in the polite tone he always used at school. Needless to say, he did not want any relations with someone of super-special A.

“N-no, don't mention it....., are you injured?”

“Ah, I'm alright. Skin doesn't seem to have been grazed anywhere”

The girl waves both hands while answering Ryou. Indeed, when looking at the girl's leg, there doesn't seem to be any soil or blood on it, it's a lovely leg. It's a thin, slender and long, excessively lovely leg. While almost being charmed, he shakes his head to drive away idle thoughts and said to the girl.

“That's good, and then wouldn't it be better if you return home before these guys wake up?”

Ryou thought that even if not the best, it would be for the better to separate from the girl quickly. The girl showed a slightly puzzled expression and approached Ryou.

“Er, but, that is....., well, Are we in the same school? Are you in second-year?”

Did the girl notice the implied meaning of Ryou's words to “Return quickly, or didn't she, she noticed but pretended not to.

Perhaps she was a bit puzzled, because it was unusual for men to try to end conversations early like this. There are likely many men who make advanced towards such a beautiful girl.

However, Ryou guessed that the natural course of events for an ordinary looking man like himself would be that they become nervous and don't say much. The girl who ignores Ryou's words of “Go home”, instead tries to find out if they're in the same school year.

It wasn't so much a question, but rather a confirmation, as the embroidery on the breast pocket was seen. In Ryou's current school there's a red color line on the breast pocket for first-years, blue for second-years and green for third years. Like Ryou, the line on the girl's breast pocket was blue.

"Ah, that's right....."

"Um, I want to express my gratitude....., can you tell me your name?"

The girl draws near to Ryou with upturned eyes. It's a face with exceptional destructive force, Ryou though while refusing.

"No, it's fine. If it's an expression of gratitude didn't you give one just now?"

Ryou's words weren't incorrect, as there was no doubt that "Thank you" was heard before. However Ryou understood that there was a wanting to go further than just a few words.

"No, no like that....., I wanted to thank you more differently....., ah, excuse me, my name is Fujimoto Erika. Class two, second year class two"

Ryou, who wanted to click his tongue, endured it. The number one method to maintain his current school life was for the people of Group A to not recognize his name or face in the first place, because of that he doesn't want his name to be known to this beautiful girl of super-special A. "Introduce oneself before asking someone's name" when wanting to know someone's name, the girl who noticed that her name wasn't given, introduced herself. Because the name and even class was given, he became dejected as it would be bad to not return it. He instantly thought to introduce himself with a false name and class, but it would be found out immediately if checked up on, so for his sake as to avoid making a commotion later on decided not to lie, and sighed a little in resignation.

".....Sakuragi Ryou, class 8"

"Sakuragi.....Ryou? Is Ryou written with this kanji?"

With her a finger, the character "亮" was written in the air.

"That's correct....., it was grasped well. And so, ah, the real thanks was heard and it's getting dark, so shouldn't you return home quickly?"

Ryou's tone seemed to gradually sound impatient. Towards Ryou whose polite tone started to slip away slightly with force behind it, Erika said.

"No, that's no good! I want to thank you further....., um, if you like, can we exchange cellphone numbers?"

While thinking that there was no need to be so fixated giving thanks and that if it is known that he exchanged numbers with her it would become troublesome, Ryou promptly said.

"Ah, well then, as a reward, could you promise not to tell anybody what I did to these guys?"

Erika who hears what Ryou said, has a curious facial expression. Ryou thought that he had a good idea. He won't be talked about and the girl can express her gratitude. It's killing two birds with one stone.

"Eh.....? Why, such a.....?"

"Ah, various points, for selfish convenience....."

"Convenience.....?, eh, but is such a thing good?"

"For me that is beneficial. Do you promise?"

"Eh....., yes, that's fine....."

Enticed by Ryou's words, the politeness in Erika's tone decreased slightly and nodded.

Ryou that saw such an Erika, breathes in relief, and continued what he was doing before Erika came. Restarting his cleanup work, he pulled the cellphone from the man's pocket and held it, transmitting the man's phone number and address data to his phone. A photograph was taken of the man's student handbook which had his name and a photo of face on it.

Furthermore it was confirmed if there was a license in the wallet, finding one he also takes a picture with his cellphone, all money notes are pulled out and put inside his own pocket. He casually scattered about the cellphone, wallet and student notebook on top of the man.

Erika was dumbfounded seeing this series of experienced movements and drew closer to Ryou while panicking.

“Wa, wait, what are you doing Sakuragi-kun!?”

“Severing future anxiety, preventing repeat offence”

Ryou spoke simply but Erika couldn't comprehend.

“Eh, b-but, do you need to go as far as take the money!?”

Ryou mutters towards Erika's inquiry.

“Game....., isn't it like in an RPG?”

He answered Erika who didn't understand the intention.

“Enemy characters in game....., when monsters are defeated don't they drop money? It's like that”

Erika cannot hide her surprise as Ryou says his peculiar theory far too indifferently.

“Eh!? But isn't it only for monsters!?”

Ryou spoke while nodding.

“Ah, monster drop, however in the case of these guys, it appears by feeling around inside their pockets....., on that point isn't it kind for a monster?”

“Eh!? That!?”

“Besides for enemies there also legitimate humans, for a Boss there are also splendid humans, additionally even bandits drop gold or a treasure chest, don't you agree? N.....? Then, are these guys kinder than bandits?”

Erika watches with a cramp on her mouth while Ryou laughs with an 'ahaha', requesting her agreement.

And so Erika decided to observe Ryou again. He has a very plain appearance. Up until today she hadn't been aware of him in school. She might have caught a glimpse of him but believes that today is the first time seeing him. Such a person spoke without hesitance.

Erika is self-aware that her appearance is superior to most people. The males at school are inquisitive towards her and occasionally send intoxicated sticky glances. When confident men make advances towards

her, they usually start to sound desperate and become aware of it. Because such people are often nearby, when ordinary men approach they become excessively nervous, conscious and run away without talking. However, before her eyes, a truly strange man was seen who could be said to be very much outside of common sense.

While Erika is thinking who on earth he was, Ryou finished carrying out similar activity to the two others and spoke to Erika.

“So, how about returning? Does what’s going to happen from here have to be seen?”

Ryou, who was worried about Erika, spoke with his normal tone. Deciding that controlling himself by speaking with a polite and courteous tone was troublesome.

Towards Ryou’s question, Erika was taken aback, worried whether or not to go home. Curiosity towards Ryou started to boil, seeing such a scary event, she shook her neck. Ryou who saw that also shook his neck.

“Haa....., I’m going to wake these guys so can you stay silent?”  
“I understand, I promise”

Erika nods with an as serious as possible face. Ryou shrugs his shoulders, looks towards the two men at his feet, nudging them with his foot jolting them awake.

“Hey, get up”

The two men stirred, while Ryou jolted them awake, started to display anguished facial expression, began to get up.

“Hey, that guy, wake him up”

Hearing what Ryou said they turned their head in the direction he was looking, seeing their friend who had fainted, a flustered voice was let out. Next, it was noticed that the cellphone, wallet and student notebook which should have been in their pocket, was scattered around them, and raised their voice towards Ryou.

“You, what did you do to us!?” ....., why is there nothing in these wallets!?”

When the men shout seeing the contents of their wallet, seeming truly irritated Ryou said.

“I hear you even without shouting, so listen up and wake that guy up”  
“What!? What was that, you!?”

Looking at the two who complained in succession towards him, Ryou with a fed up expression takes off his glasses and glared at the two of them.

“You guys, who do think you’re facing with such a mouth?”

Ryou shouldn’t be anyone in particular, but the moment Ryou started to glare at them, the two sensed instinctively they shouldn’t go against him, and in a panic ran to wake up the friend who was still out.

Because Erika was near to where the two ran towards, Ryou beckons to Erika to get behind him and she jogs over to his location. Seeing Ryou who had taken off his glasses, Erika showed a little bit of a surprised appearance.

While Erika goes to Ryou, the other man woke up and a bewildered feeling could clearly be seen on him.

“Good, you guys, sit there”

Ryou makes a command towards them. The men were about to complain, but immediately with Ryou’s glare, they sat down cross-legged on the spot. Ryou who saw that had a disgusted facial expression.

“Are you guys idiots? When I say so kneel in seiza”

While being puzzled, the three men looked at each other, then obediently kneeled in seiza when they saw the face of Ryou who was glaring.

Erika watched the situation with an open mouth.

Ryou confirmed the three men were in seiza and spoke to them.

“That’s good, you guys. The scene of you guys who were rough with this girl, was video recorded on my cellphone.

Ryou who held his cellphone in his right hand, showed Erika.

""Haa!?"""

"Eh!?"

It was a chorus of four people. Naturally the three men, Erika also raised her voice in surprise. Ryo slowly nodded.

"And then your guys' cellphone number, e-mail address, home address, photo of face, school and class, I have them"

"Wh-What!?"

The man who had just woken up a little bit ago said so, and for the first time noticed that his cellphone and things were scattered about.

"And that's not all! The money's taken!!"

Towards the men with an indignant expression Ryou says something unexpected.

"It's the consequence of your actions, aren't you aware of the term karma? You did something bad, so simply a bad thing is returned to you. Were you not told by your parents or teacher that it's wrong to be violent towards a girl? The money is for consolation, or think of it as an annoyance fee. Because the small change was sufficiently left behind, you can return home"

When Ryou says so, the man on the right shouted.

"Stop joking with me, you!"

The man in the center received energy from his friend's shout screamed at the same time.

"That's right, what are you doing to us!"

Hearing the words, Ryou twitches in reaction, and casually kicks the face of the man in the middle.

'Gon', the man that was kicked is bent backwards with an unpleasant sound.

The men to the right and left of the man who was kicked didn't see Ryou's foot when he kicked. Hearing a sudden unpleasant sound coming from the



friend next to them, seeing him bent backwards, an expression of shock floats on their faces.

Erika has a similar look of surprise on her face.

“You, what to do.....? You three approach a girl, should I knock you down after all?”

The men felt a chill and hardened in the situation when Ryou’s atmosphere suddenly changes.

Erika also held her breath and hardened for a moment, in a panic she grasped Ryou’s arm.

“I’m fine, isn’t it already enough?”

It’s not that Erika didn’t also feel some fear towards Ryou, however, she towards this person, felt that he isn’t someone who would use violence against a girl, so it was possible to break out of her rigidity.

Ryou whose arm was grasped by Erika stiffened instantly, an expression of dismay is shown. Tilting his head Ryou looked to his side, his appearance of dismay getting stronger could be seen. Immediately pulling himself back together, he said towards the frightened men.

“Anyway, do not get close to this girl again. Do not loiter around this vicinity again. Ah, be careful not to appear in her and my field of vision. If you do not follow what was said, the video with your profile will be put on the internet, including your cellphone number. Or rather, die”

The men shiver from Ryou’s words, running away in a rush while saying sorry many times. In doing so, they shouldn’t approach her again. On the other hand, hearing misunderstood words, Erika grasped Ryou’s arm tighter. Ryou tried to deny it in a hurry, but stiffened once again and was not able to voice his denial.

Once the men had gone away, an abrupt silence with nothing being said came about, Ryou coughed to clear his throat. Erika who inclined her neck looks up to Ryou with curiosity. Ryou who saw that face, in that moment, said to Erika while removing his glance.

“Ah, um, could you release my arm?”

When it was said, Erika noticed for the first time that she was embracing Ryou’s arm, also that it was pressed firmly against her chest was realized. Kya, Erika that realized it, parts from Ryou’s arm in a panic with her face bright red.

“I-I’m sorry.....”

Erika looks at Ryou timidly, whose face has also become red. Ryou matched eyes with her and let out he really thought.

“No, its fine....., it was a side benefit”

Erika’ face becomes more red hearing that, coughing to clear her throat, she inquired uneasy about something.

“Hey, about that video.....”

“Yes? Ah....., it was taken properly. If you want it to be erased just say so.....”

“Um....., it’s not that”

“Hm.....?”

Ryou didn’t understand what Erika was saying, Erika asked again with a smiling face.

“Since when was it taken? Can you show me?”

Ryou who hears those words notices his mistake, being self-conscious of what he did wrong, resigning himself, he handed over his cellphone.

Ryou avoids looking at Erika as she watches the video quietly, while thinking if there wasn’t a way to prevent hearing the sound that was leaking. When the video playback ends, Erika returned the cellphone back to Ryou. Something similar to smile became visible.

“It was taken very early wasn’t it?”

“Hm.....?, ah, that’s right”

“I received you help so such a thing is difficult to say however, for what reason, didn’t you help earlier?”

Ryou that saw Erika's frightening smile felt that it could unreservedly enter into the worst ranking of smiling faces.

"That is, troublesome....., ahem, I thought you might be able to do something by yourself"

"Is that so? When my arm was caught, and I was resisting, how was it seen so in your eyes?"

"Ah....., I was rooting for you to persevere"

It was Ryou's true feelings, there was no lie.

"So....."

Erika faced Ryou's front, smiling pleasantly, held her arms aloft, "Then help earlier!" while saying so she hit Ryou's cheek.

Though it was possible to avoid, Ryou considered after how frightening it seemed to be, resigned himself, and received the beautiful girl's slap.

Something painful is painful even if received on purpose, staggering lightly afterwards and waiting for the flickering in his eyes to calm down, haa, he sighed.

"My bad....., I was able to help earlier, but didn't"

Erika who receives Ryou's apology also returns an apology. Saying sorry though you saved me I glossed over it, again, you saved me, thank you, was once again said.

"The promise....., do you recall?"

"Promise.....? Ah, yes, I know 'not telling anybody what you did to those guys here' isn't it? But, is it really fine like this?"

"That is fine....., well then"

Ryou puts his glasses back on while answering, Erika who saw that asked him.

"Why don't you use contact lenses?"

"This is, my presence....., no, I like glasses"

It seems like a bit of time had gone by being unadorned, the feelings of wearing glasses hadn't changed. Ryou, whose true intentions almost came out, thought that he must quickly part ways with the beautiful girl in front of him.

"Is it so? I think it's good without the glasses....."

Erika said so while becoming slightly red, the voice tapered off gradually and Ryou couldn't hear it.

"Eh? What"

Erika shook her head flustered.

"No, it's nothing....., are we returning? You're facing the station aren't you?"

Ryou thought inwardly not to joke. If he walks side by side with such a girl towards the station, a rumor would spread by tomorrow, and the considerable effort and troubles up to now would come to nothing.

"No....., err, I remembered something I have to do at school, I'll return for a little"

"Did you? Then, let's go t-....."

Ryou interrupted Erika before she finished her words.

"No, it's fine! Thank you, later then!"

Was said in a panic then he runs along the road towards the school.

"Keep the promise-" is produced with the Doppler effect.

Erika who had a dumbfounded appearance seeing him off muttered a very reasonable opinion.

"Normally, after helping a girl who was attacked, isn't it good manners to escort her home for little bit?"

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## Chapter 2 – Sense of Incongruity

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Ryou who ran for a while, stopped at a suitable place and breathed a sigh of relief that he was somehow able to part ways with her. There was a highly unexpected incident today, but he was able to successfully make those involved in a state of being hushed. Ryou praised himself while thinking that he dealt with it very skillfully. He may have been a bit late, but he was able to help the girl and she also wasn't injured. Though his cellphone number was asked for, he successfully avoided giving it. As the reward it was decided that a promise would be kept. Ryou was relieved that he won't be talked about as part of a rumor tomorrow. It is regrettable to lose the chance to become on good terms with such a beautiful girl, but from the start, Ryou was indifferent towards the like of her inside school. He doesn't know what kind of rumor he would become the target of. That being the case, though the school's top idol could be an on the mark strike in terms of his taste, girls of the same school were considered outside his range of affections. Therefore up to now he didn't even know the name of the school's top idol and erased it from his memory even if he heard it.

"However, that girl, I feel like I've seen her somewhere....."

Ryou said to himself while looking puzzled.

Immediately he slaps his hand with a pop and realized the answer.

"It's normal to feel like I've seen her, since we're from the same school"

It was a foolish thought, ending with a safe answer. Feeling clear-headed, he started returning home again.

However, Ryou would later greatly regret not changing the contents of the promise. In order for Ryou to maintain his present position, the promise of 'not telling anybody what he did to those guys' was necessary but it was not, 'Erika must not talk to Ryou anymore' which is certainly important. It was a large miscalculation of Ryou not to take into account that Erika would show interest towards him.

Erika was perplexed on her way back to the station. Up to now, there were many men who approached her, but for her invitations, there wasn't a memory of anyone who ran away from her (to say invite didn't mean to court). He, Ryou, gave off a scary feeling, a strange fear was felt, but Erika thinks it to be just one side of him. He himself said that he was slow to come help, even so, in the end he reliably helped her. When the situation became dangerous, he averted attention towards himself, and help was given. Additionally, the men were gathered, and Ryou gave them instructions such as not to approach her again. The various actions before that seemed to be separated from common sense, but in the end it was all for Erika's sake (except for taking the money).

She was surprised when the glasses were taken off and his face was seen. It was difficult to see with the glasses on, but then the feelings inside the eyes were transmitted that his heart was very warm and gave off a calming feeling. Therefore, when he became angry and a cold wave gushed out from him, feeling it didn't suit him, she unintentionally grabbed his arm to stop him.

He is a mysterious person, or perhaps a strange person, or rather a scary person, Erika doesn't know. Without hesitation she felt that she didn't want to lose connection with him and thought to consult someone. Thinking about calling someone, her hand reaches for her cellphone, when the promise to him is suddenly recalled, her hand stopped.

'Do you promise not to tell anybody what I did to those guys?'

His real intentions why he made such a promise wasn't known, thinking it was for some dirty reasons, no that's not possible, however in that case, to who, in what manner, while also keeping the promise with him. When thinking of who to consult, her close friend who is most suited comes to mind. She decided her mind would be more at ease after returning home and consulting over a phone call. While humming a song, she returned in high spirits.

The evening of that day, the time is passed 8 'o clock. Erika's first close friend she made after entering high school, Suzuki Azusa was called.

After calling several times, Azusa picked up.

"Hello, Erika?"

“Yes, is it fine now?”

“It’s fine, is something up?”

“Yes, I have something to consult about with you.....”

“Heh? On the phone, that’s rare”

“Is that so?”

“It is rare, aren’t you the type to normally meet and talk when there’s a consultation....., is it urgent?”

“No, it’s not that like I’m in a hurry.....”

“Hmm? Then what happened? Did you finally find a man you like??

Azusa while grinning says so to Erika. What popped instantly into Erika’s head, was the face of the man who helped her today, but she quickly denied that thought. Put simply, he didn’t come to mind because of a reaction towards the phrase ‘man you like’, but because he is the target of the consultation.

“It-it’s different!”

“....., heh”

Within Azusa’s expression, a sound of admiration was mixed in

“Hey, it’s true”

“Yes yes, so, what kind of person is he?”

and Azusa answered like she didn’t believe her at all.

“Are you listening? It’s not about love, but because I don’t know what kind of person he is, I merely wanted to consult!”

“.....ye-ah, she’s denying it, I need affirmation, the words weren’t understood.....”

“Enough! Are you going to hear the story!? Or aren’t you!?”

The light laughter of Azusa could be heard

“I’ll hear you out, so calm down”

Erika cooled down a little and talked about what happened on the way back home today, his

‘Do you promise not to tell anybody what I did to those guys?’

promise within its scope wasn’t broken. That is to say, she only spoke about how she was saved from three men.

Azusa who heard it asked a question.

“How did he save you?”

“Sorry, I can’t say”

“Can’t say? Why’s that?”

“I promised not to tell”

“You can’t say, is that so....., a promise not to say.....”

With her words, Azusa’s emotions seemed to diminish. It was a habit of hers when she was drifting in the sea of her thoughts.

“He said it would be fine not to tell anyone what happened a reward”

“And yet, you consulted with me? Isn’t that breaking the promise?”

Azusa questioned in surprise, because as far as she knew, Erika wasn’t someone who would break a promise immediately after making them.

“It.....isn’t....., after all my promise to him was about what he did to those three men, nothing about me.....”

There was some hesitation in Erika’s words, Azusa was taken aback for a moment.



Azusa didn't understand the true intention behind his promise, but she felt that he desired for what happened today not to be talked about by anyone.

It can't be that Erika didn't notice, that she was hesitant in her answer. But even so she did use a hole in the promise that was made with him to consult, it was surprising.

And what else was surprising, is that Erika goes so far as to consult with her, it was something Azusa she was questioning greatly in her mind.

Realizing to that far, Azusa laughed in such a way that a 'kukukuku' sound escaped her throat.

".....Azusa, that's a little bit eerie"

"No, sorry. Up to now Erika, this is the first time you worry about someone like this, moreover it's a man"

"Hey, stop with this weirdness"

"I understand, I understand. Fufu"

Erika involuntarily, haa, sighed.

"And so, after you received help, I guess you returned home together while talking?"

"That is, um....."

Again, a hesitant answer, oh, what is it this time? She was puzzled.

"He ran away"

"Huh?"

Azusa didn't understand the meaning of her best friend's words, it was unusual for her and a hysteric voice was let out.

Towards that reaction of Azusa, maybe a little bit annoyed or embarrassed, Erika slightly raised her voice.

“So, he ran away! I asked to return together, but there seemed to be business at school, and he ran away!”

“Erika requested to return together, and he ran away?”

“Yes”

“Erika invited?”

“Yes”

“....., wasn’t there really business at school?”

Azusa said so in a highly doubtful voice.

“The way it was, I didn’t see at all. When I said we can go to the school together, he quickly refused and ran.....”

Probably because she was recalling that time, Erika seemed to be in shock and her words steadily sounded softer.

However, Azusa imagines a man running away from Erika, and bursts out laughing.

Hearing that voice, Erika’s raised her voice as one would expect.

“Hey, what are you laughing at!”

“No, sorrysorry....., that Erika, that school idol finally invites a man, but he refuses and runs away.....ahahaha!”

Erika’s face became bright red with embarrassment.

“Enough already, I’m ending it! See you!”

“Wait, wait, I apologize....., ahahahaha”

Out of breath, Erika’s close friend apologizes while still laughing. Thinking about hanging up at once, Erika noticed that she hasn’t consulted yet and only spoke about what happened today. At a loss with what to do about the laughter, she restrained her feelings of anger which were welling up.

Azusa's laughter is certainly still being let out, she thought.

"Have you settled down?"

Erika's low voice was heard, for this she must be considerably angry. Azusa who was thinking so suppressed her laughter, and answers in a calm voice.

"Ah, I'm settled. ..., so then, what's his name?"

"Finally, we can get down to business"

Erika says it in a way that the cynicism can be heard.

"So, you're angry. I understand, do you want to hear the information from my database?"

"Yes, the name is Sakuragi Ryou"

"Sakuragi Ryou.....? Sakuragi Ryou....., ah, that guy"

Erika was surprised, she didn't think Azusa had made mental notes on him.

"You know him!?"

"Ah, it took some time to remember....., I see, that guy....."

Hearing Azusa's response, Erika asked while perplexed.

"What do you mean? Do you know something about him? Are you acquainted?"

"I remember him, if it's asked I don't know anything and of course we're not acquaintances. Wait a minute....., I'll pull out the information now"

When Azusa says so, clattering could be heard from Azusa's background. Erika understood at once the sound is coming from typing on a keyboard.

"Ah, it was. It's him after all....."

"Say, what does 'that' and 'after all' mean? Don't you know something?"

“No, I don’t know”

“Then, what do you mean?”

“Ah....., people observation is a hobby of mine, so during physical measurements, all records of measurements such as physical fitness were obtained. You know my data comes as a result of my observation right?”

“Eh....., when hearing it again, it’s unthinkable”

Azusa habitually observes people as a hobby. Demonstrating the result of her observation guesses, she uses her household’s abundant assets to get hold of information on the whole school’s pupils into her hands. However, privacy is considered to some extent, when information is gotten, she mainly makes sure not to obtain information about their pasts. Unless by supplement they become a target of her’s.

However, it’s not like the information rises to the surface within school. If someone in school became aware, if rumors started to rise, then her personal connections are used in full, and the information within school, almost all of it is covered up.

Therefore Erika consulted with Azusa about him.

“And? Is there something? About him”

Erika held down her reflexively impatient feelings to listen to Azusa.

“I think it’s a sense of incongruity”

“Sense of incongruity?”

Erika felt as if a question mark floated above her head.

“Yes, a sense of incongruity”

“What kind of?”

“Nn....., when I first saw him at that time for a moment I felt a sense of incongruity to some degree. I wonder what that sense of incongruity was....., didn’t it occur especially when he was walking together with

people....., that's right, I remember. It wasn't felt so much when he was alone, but when he was walking with his friends, it was felt stronger.

"Um....., in what way?"

Erika's perplexity grows deeper.

"Yes, at first, I felt a sense of incongruity, but, that's where my thoughts ended. Because I was interested I recorded it in a document, as a result, when I looked at the physical fitness measurements carefully, there was something strange, U-m, ah, it was this"

The clattering of a keyboard being struck is heard.

"The results of last year's physical fitness measurements, do you remember it was divided among two days?"

Erika began to recall that it was so, and answered in the affirmative.

"And the results expressed were with nine stages C- to A+?"

"Yeah, my average results this year was A-, didn't Azusa get an A?"

"Yes, but his average results for the first day of last year was C, and the average for the second day was A, the two days combine for an average of B"

Again, though it was thought to be an extreme result, what it means wasn't understood.

"So, and?"

"That is, when you look at this year's result, the first days result were A, the second days result were C so the two days average is B"

"....., U-m?"

"By the way the order of the measurement events are the same this year as last year"

“In other words, he on all events, on both the first and second day can get an A?”

“There is that also, I was interested in the results of first day as well as the second day, as without exception there were people in his class with the same results. On the first day last year it was Kouno-kun, who is in my class now”

“Ah, Kouno-kun....., eh!? His and Kouno-kun’s physical fitness measurements were the same!?”

Erika recalls Kouno-kun from the same class and is surprised. Kouno is a very docile person, his reflexes were so bad that everyone knew of it. Thinking of the fight today and that he and Kouno had the same physical strength on that first day’s measurements was very unbelievable.

“Yes, that’s only the first day of last year. Fufu, being surprised at that is pointless. And, his results of last year’s second day were the same as Satou-kun who is now in class 4. The braggy ace of the soccer club, who became a junior representative”

That Satou-kun!?”

Incidentally, she recalls he has made advances several times. His looks were ordinary, but because he is known as the soccer ace he was always full of himself.

“Ah, that reminds me that he has made advances to Erika several times”

Ahaha, hearing Azusa’s laughter, Erika’s perplexity extends further.

“Something like this....., extremely, isn’t it strange? Getting identical results with those two”

“Isn’t it? To say it’s not strange would be strange”

“Perhaps....., this year also?”

“Oh yes, this year’s first day results were the same as that of the basketball club’s ace Ono-kun from his class, and the second day was the same as Yamashita-kun from his class”

Basketball club's ace Ono-kun has also made advances, even a confession occurred. It was politely refused. As the ace, Ono having splendid reflexes was well known.

"Yamashita-kun? Who's that?"

"Ye-s, speaking ill, I don't really know him. But I can say his reflexes aren't good"

"He has the same results as that Yamashita-kun? He who was equal to Satou-kun of last year?"

"Yes, isn't it weird?"

"It's strange no matter how I think....., don't the teachers think it to be strange?"

"Even the teachers, if all his records were to be seen alongside him, they're sure to have felt it to be peculiar because his body's presence is thin. Who before that would find anything to be strange? I believe there is a reason to think so. I would likely think so if I saw him by chance. Because last year's separate shining results were combined with the others, the teachers likely didn't think anything was strange"

It is thought that what Azusa said is reasonable. After all Azusa was the one who actually was the first to feel a little sense of incongruity, while the teacher's didn't see or think of the pupil whose presence was thin.

"And, with the comparison with the second year's results and hearing what Erika said, I somehow understand the sense of incongruity I first felt"

Thinking she can finally hear the observation result of Azusa, Erika reflexively sits up straight.

"Really!? What is it?"

"Now now, it hasn't left the stage of conjecture"

"That's fine, teach me"

Erika seems to be impatient as she says so. Azusa calmly says to such an Erika.

“To make it clear, I’ll teach you. But leaving that aside for now, shouldn’t you talk to him if you’re interested? Rather than calling me, it would be good to call him”

Erika, while feeling irritated toward Azusa who stopped informing her, received Azusa’s question and remembered.

“That reminds me, I don’t know his phone number.....”

“That’s unusual, didn’t you ask? Ah, now that you mention it he avoided returning together with you and ran away”

“It’s different. At first, when he heard from me, he swept it aside..... However I thought I would be able to ask while on the way back”

“But he ran away.....kukukuku”

“Hey! What of it!?”

“It’s interesting.....”

“In any case, I was avoided!”

“He’s unusual, Sakuragi Ryou”

“You’re interested? In him.....? However it certainly feels strange”

“Yeah, it’s very interesting. For there to still be an interesting observation target in the same year....., kukukuku”

Hearing Azusa’s remark which sounded serious to a certain extent, Erika asked in hurry

“H-Hey, what do you mean when you say its interesting!?”

“N? Ah, don’t worry. I’m not interested in him as a man. He is strictly an observation object”



Erika breathed in relief to Azusa's quick reply.

"I-Is that so?"

"Don't worry because it's not in my nature to take away from Erika"

"What do you mean by take away!?"

"The meaning is what it is....., yes yes, it's nothing"

Azusa who was thinking and ceased talking, wasn't actually able to measure how much Erika was interested in him, but thought after this it would be good to set Erika as well for observation.

"Enough....., didn't I say it wasn't like that!?"

"I see....., then, should we go meet him tomorrow? At school"

Azusa hears Erika speak in a panic.

"Eh....., wh-wh-why!?"

"Why....., I also want to meet him, and wouldn't it be good to thank him once again? Don't you think your reward to be insufficient?"

"I certainly think the reward to be insufficient....., I would only stay silent in the end"

"Therefore, to say thanks once more, wouldn't it be good? I also want to thank him for helping my close friend....., at that time wouldn't it be good to take the opportunity to hear his phone number?"

"U.....m, then, let's do so. So can you tell me now?"

To the best friend's too cute reaction, Azusa naturally began to smile broadly.

"I think it will be alright"

As a matter of fact Azusa didn't think so at all. She guessed in his case he would dislike it. For her close friend, to make up for embarrassing a her and

for her own enjoyment she decided to incite her close friend. But, it's certainly a fact he helped her close friend from danger, as gratitude, she would take care to look out for his well-being hereafter, Azusa swore in her mind.

Though she hasn't talked with him yet, from that sense of incongruity and his avoiding of Erika, Azusa arrived at a conjecture of 'he doesn't want to stand out'.

## Chapter 3 – Event in the Classroom

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Ryou was lacking sleep.

Because there was a little accident yesterday while returning, he got home late. Therefore he was late for his part time job and was made to work overtime until late at midnight with disregard for the Labor Standards Law.

The drowsiness didn't disappear even while going to school in the morning. Entering the classroom with the feeling of having used several times the normal energy, he exchanged greetings with a classmate who noticed him then he sat down in his window side seat which he considered to be the second best position.

At the same time as he sat down, Shouji from the same class as he was in first year, turns around from his seat in front and smiles at Ryou.

“Good morning, you seem to be sleepy today”

“Good morning. Too much. Don't wake me till the teacher comes”

Ryou answered while looking at the clock in the classroom then lying down on his desk. There was another 10 minutes until homeroom, though he could only lie down until then, his drowsiness seems to flare up.

“When the teacher comes I'll wake you”

Though Shouji laughs, he says so in the affirmative and looks forward.

Ryou concentrates all his of nerves, without 10 seconds having passed since the moment he plunged into the world of sleep, the class became noisy.

Ryou felt that the air in the classroom had changed, though he thought to momentarily raise his head, his drowsiness won out.

Without changing his body posture, half of his consciousness was ruled by sleep, feeling signs that Shouji in the front seat turned around, he was called out to.

“H-hey, Ryou”

Ryou clicked his tongue in his mind. Ryou still stays in his sleeping pose, one minute hasn't passed. Though Shouji is his closest friend in school, he was told not to wake him, to suddenly call out, is too much for a joke. Ryou resumed sleeping as is without answering.

“H-hey”

Shouji called out further and shook Ryou's body.

There is no need to take notice of school people, while Ryou who is half asleep is thinking something dangerous about striking him with a punch, a voice rose from overhead.

“Sakuragi-kun”

It was a very clear voice. You can say cute and lovely are an appropriate adjective for the voice. Though the voice wasn't loud, it seems to echo inside the classroom. The noisy classroom became silent for a moment.

Ryou's drowsiness vanishes in an instant when the voice was heard, he was surprised but praised his body which didn't show it. While maintaining his sleeping posture as it is, he felt cold sweat running down his back, his brain began to turn at a high speed to find a way out.

(Why, is the woman from yesterday, inside this classroom!? Didn't yesterday's matter end yesterday!? If I see those three idiots I'm striking them, I unintentionally let out a thirst for blood, but, I thought it was understood that I pulled back, I thought we wouldn't come into contact anymore! No, this is out of the question....., okay, for now I'll maintain my sleeping appearance. If I don't get up she'll give up and return, no, go back!!)

Seeing Ryou not reacting even when called, Erika looks at Shouji who was sitting in front of him, and asked while puzzled.

“Is he asleep?”

Shouji who was called out to by the beautiful idol-like girl who he had only seen in a distant view up to now, was feeling embarrassed.

Looking considerably dismayed he answered.

“A-ah....., sh-should I wake him?”

He completely forgot what Ryou said, while holding down the anger welling up towards his friend proposing that, Ryou maintains his sleeping pretense.

When Erika was going to reply to Shouji’s proposal, and was worried for an instant on what to do, Azusa who entered the classroom with her speaks up.

“Erika, it’s fine to wake him”

“....., is it fine?”

Azusa nods to Erika with a smile full of confidence.

(Not good, not good, there’s another woman? Reinforcements can leave.....)

Ryou felt things were developing in a bad direction.

“Hey, Sakuragi-kun....., Sakuragi-kun? That’s no good, he isn’t waking up?”  
(That’s right, Sakuragi-kun has a reason not to get up, therefore, let’s leave quickly)

Azusa smiles deeply and says while shaking her hands.

“He must be woken up more strongly”

Shaking him awake seems to be the meaning. Erika who was observing him thought so for an instant, nodded and shook Ryou’s shoulder.

“Hey, Sakuragi-kun”

(Stop it!!)

Ryou screamed in his mind.

The reaction of the classroom seeing that was great. The girls were popeyed with surprise, the boys, were whispering why such a thing to each other, and glances of perplexity mixed with envy, jealousy and murderous intent were turned to Ryou.

Feeling the glance in the class growing stronger and light fear from the hand shaking him, he judged that maintaining his current condition would be bad, while breathing with resignation in his mind, making a face as if he had just woken up, he slowly raised his face.

“Ah, he’s up....., sorry, Sakuragi-kun?”

Ryou doesn’t understand what’s happening, his facial expression says so, why is the rumored school idol in front of him? Is blended into his facial expression.

“No....., is there something?”

Erika seeing Ryou’s attitude being completely different to yesterday, thought he was angry about being woken by force, looked down and apologized once more.

“Um....., I’m sorry, I woke you. Are you angry?”

She said so faintly with upturned eyes. It was important so she said it twice while looking down.

The faces of several female students became red as well.

Opposite to Shouji was a group of male students who saw that situation, their faces seem to grow intoxicated with their souls snatched away. If you go by an old saying, you could say their hearts were stolen.

From the boys who were behind Erika, voices of anger and hatred rose up towards Ryou. Although they weren’t loud voices, Ryou was able to hear them, such as you bastard and don’t joke around.

(Men and women without discrimination.....)

Ryou was somehow able to restrain a cramp showing on his mouth, becoming aware that he himself was becoming bright red he suppressed it, and answered.

“No, I’m not angry. ....., is there business?”

Ryou to the bitter end with this first meeting in front of classmates, wanted the crowd to not think of them as friends with his tone. Ryou aims for the default way of talking to girls in school which is that of a quiet student with a gentle approach.

To the tone of such a Ryou, Erika showed a puzzled expression. After an expression as if she made up her mind, she bowed.

“Thank you very much for yesterday. Apart from yesterday, again, I wanted you to receive my thanks, is that fine?”

It was noisy inside the classroom.

Ryou to the unwanted gratitude, thought whether he was insolent to consider it as such.

“Didn’t I say it’s fine not to worry about yesterday? ....., besides, I thought we came to an agreement about your thanks.....”

“Eh, but in my mind it’s not settled. I thought you would be glad to receive it in some way.....”

Erika’s tone became a little tense as a result of the change in Ryou’s tone.

Ryou thought there was no use in refusing anymore and breathed a sigh of resignation.

“....., I understand. ....., but, before that, what about yesterday’s thing.....?”

To the right and left of Erika were girls not from the same class.

On the left was a girl with a beautiful well-featured appearance not inferior to Erika, a Yamato Nadeshiko in appearance with long black hair and black rim glasses.

On the right, a short girl standing expressionlessly with hair cut short again with good looks.

Because of that Ryou looking left and right of her, Erika noticed at once what he meant by 'thing'.

In place of Erika whose mouth started opening in a panic, wearing the black rim glasses, Suzuki Azusa raised her voice.

"Erika kept the promise, so don't worry"

"No, but....., I got it"

When such a thing is said, was the promise not breached? Ryou thought about it, the promise not to talk to anyone, Ryou recalled he didn't say that.

"Um....., but, sorry? Hear the story by all means....."

Erika says while peeking at him, Ryou says it's fine and shakes his neck.

Usually, what happened yesterday, would cause considerable stress for a girl. Isn't it natural to want to vent while speaking to someone, because Ryou thought that, he didn't intend to blame Erika.

He would like it if the gratitude wasn't done in front of everyone where they can see them talking. To make them disperse soon, at the time he started opening his mouth, Azusa said.

"Erika stubbornly kept her promise to you, I'm envious of it"

While Azusa broadly grinned, a bomb was dropped.

The bomb which was dropped blew up the classroom magnificently.

Ryou felt his mouth had a cramp, but was not able to suppress it.

"He-hey, Azusa!?"

Erika becomes bright red and protests to Azusa.

"What is it?"



Ryou seeing the easygoing Azusa talking, he was somehow convinced this woman understands that he is bothered by this.

A little, it was felt she was similar to him.

Watching Ryou's lips, Azusa's smile deepening was seen and he was convinced furthermore.

Warding off Erika's protest, Azusa looked back to the clock and said.

"There's not much time left, Erika, let's continue this later"

Ryou looks at the clock, indeed, homeroom begins soon.

Erika looks at the clock as well.

"Eh, already!? It's true....., ah, cellphone....."

Ryou to the word of cellphone, surely, his impatience was remembered.

"Postpone your exchanging of numbers, we'll exchange with him later"

Once again, Ryou felt dismay seeing Azusa who said so towards him.

The looks of murderous intent from the boys in the classroom was peaking.

"I'm sorry, Sakuragi-kun? Later....., during lunchtime, is it fine to come again?"

With a worn out face, Ryou nods, and the three beautiful girls leave the classroom.

At the same time as the three leave the classroom and the eyes in the classroom gather towards Ryou, the chime to signal the start of homeroom rang.

After homeroom and the first period had ended during the break, Ryou was enclosed by the boys of his class.

No, he was surrounded, it should be said.

“How did this happen, Sakuragi?”

Sasaki of the class's Group A questioned Sakuragi.

He's physique is good, when approached, plentiful feelings of intensity can be felt.

Shouji from the seat in front turns around and is excited to hear it.

“Really. Why did Fujimoto-san, Suzuki-san and Yamaoka-san come to meet Ryou?”

Whose name belongs to whom, Ryou doesn't know, but he didn't let out that question.

What is the gratitude for, what happened yesterday, are you exchanges phone numbers!? Why with you! Can I accompany you during lunch? Questions full with resentment, Ryou who received those voices of jealousy felt that depending on his reply, his peaceful life could disappear.

“Actually.....”

To hear the voice of Ryou who opened his mouth, everyone ceased talking, the classroom became silent in an instant.

Of course Ryou didn't intend to tell the truth. Even if it's told, it seems it will be difficult to make them believe it.

So Ryou thought of an excuse.

“I only helped her after she fell down”

The sound of someone falling down was heard.

It wasn't a lie. Because it is a fact he helped her after she fallen over.

A plain story for the plain him, Ryou concluded everyone would believe it.

For a moment everyone was blank, ah, here and there a consenting face was seen.

Yet, an apologetic man questions it.

“Then, what was the promise?”

“Um, that is....., when I helped her up, I also ended up falling over. It was embarrassing so I said to be silent about it”

That was a lie. However, the part about keeping silent was true.

“Huh!? That’s it!?”

“Ah, it’s like that”

Ryou while adjusting his glasses with one hand, answers dignifiedly.

A lie said in a dignified manner, is still a lie.

“You, what are you doing at lunch time?”

“I’m being treated to juice”

He shrugs his shoulders and gives a safe answer. In fact Ryou intended it to be so.

However, it’s still something enviable....., being muttered was let through and is audible.

“Then, what about exchanging numbers!?”

The men hearing that were provoked again.

“That person, I hear her asking a man by herself is unusual!!”

To this, Ryou was the most worried, so he thought a half truth is safe.

“Because she wants say thanks, I refused several times but she said she would consult about the gratitude over e-mail or phone. When we were going exchange them her cellphone’s battery ran out, so she came today. So it seems juice will be received as her gratitude”

When you carefully take into account Azusa's words and behavior and the whole story, there are some contradictory points, but Ryou thinks it shouldn't be to the extent the story seems impossible.

Actually, some of the classmates have a suspicious expression, but consenting faces are seen here and there.

Ryou rounded it off with these words.

"Her integrity is wonderful, I only helped her up after she fell, yet she shows so much gratitude"

The boys, ah, if it is that person it might be so, muttered with an expression as if in a trance.

With things like this, Ryou felt relieved he would be forgotten before long if he makes his shadow thin as usual.

It was now the short break after third period but before lunch break. Ryou who had cleared the interrogation of questions somehow, arrived in front of Erika's class.

He heard that the three beautiful girls were in the same class, and it seems to be the envy of boys to be in that class. He didn't want to approach such a frightening class, and Ryou was vigilant of Azusa.

Because that woman seemed to understand he was troubled but repeated her conduct, but he strongly felt he didn't want those three to suddenly come during lunch break and surround his desk to eat.

Therefore, he decided to make the first move and tell Erika when he saw her to go to the roof for lunch break.

The rooftop is normally locked, with strict student prohibition. However from what Ryou learned out of his part time job livelihood, lock picking skills were used, so it was possible to freely come and go to the rooftop.

Because students are strictly prohibited, he can spend time without having to worry about glances on the rooftop.

Ryou that came to the front of the class looks to the inside through the upper windowpane on the door, and the person he was looking for was found immediately.

Probably wherever she is, she is likely to be found at once.

When looking, the place she is at seems to have been lit by a spotlight and has a bright mood to it.

Is that her aura? When Ryou thinks so, Azusa who was next to Erika notices Ryou.

When Azusa matches eyes with Ryou he remembers his impatience, contrary to expectation, Azusa only alerted Erika.

Erika who notices Ryou was a surprised expression for a moment, then immediately made a glad-looking face and approached Ryou's position with a half run.

(After all, considerably cute.....)

Ryou thought so unconsciously, it can be considered man's nature to think of something cute as cute.

"What's wrong, do you intend to go for lunch break?"

A smile of the whole face was received, Ryou says to the radiant face in a small voice to come to the rooftop.

Though it seemed strange, Erika accepted while looking delighted.

It seems to be strange because the rooftop is normally strictly prohibited for students.

Ryou who received approval, ran away immediately.

Once again from inside class (a different class this time) he was basked in glances from in there as well as from the hallway.



## Chapter 4 – Lunch Break

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Entering lunch break, Ryou dashes out of the classroom before he is called by someone. Bread and drink was bought from the school store and while glancing around he went towards the rooftop.

When Ryou reaches the rooftop he confirms that there's nobody there, sits on the ground leaning against the handrail and began to eat the bread.

They didn't promise to eat together, so he ate without waiting for Erika and them.

After having eaten three of the breads, the three girls arrived.

They could each be seen with a bag likely to be their lunch.

Erika who notices Ryou goes close to him, takes out a sheet from her bag, and spreads it in front of him.

Why does she have a sheet, while thinking that he was invited onto the sheet and he took off his shoes as they were a hindrance.

"Sakuragi-kun, do you have a key to the rooftop?"

Erika asked curiously.

"No....., ah, do you have a key?"

"Not us, Azusa has one"

When Erika says so, Azusa shows the key to Ryou.

The preparation of the sheet seems to be ready.

Why does Azusa have a key to the roof she shouldn't be allowed to have and only a teacher can have, he decided to look the other way.

The three open their respective lunches and began to eat.

“If you don’t have a key, how did you enter?”

Azusa asked a reasonable question, Ryou shrugs his shoulders and a lock picking tool was shown.

“Such a thing, to do that.....”

Erika has an expression that she doesn’t know what to say, while Azusa has an expression of interest.

“You really are an interesting man....., that reminds me I haven’t introduced myself. I’m Suzuki Azusa. Call me as you like”

To be frank, Ryou didn’t want to meet. Thinking about what to call the other party, the self-introduction was returned.

“I see, Suzuki-san. I’m Sakuragi Ryou. If possible call me by my family name”

“You won’t use Azusa?”

“Ah, Suzuki-san”

“Jeez, but is that good?”

“Yes, Suzuki-san”

“You’re not an interesting man.....”

Azusa says in a sulky manner, something which is the opposite of what she said just now.

Erika who saw Azusa’s state, introduced the other girl in a hurry

“Uh, this girl is.....”

“Yamaoka Saki”

But the girl with the short hair that was expressionless concisely announced her name.

“She’s a girl who doesn’t talk much....., usually when Azusa and me chat she sits across and listens, and speaks when spoken to”

Ryou who hears Erika’s introduction, thought Saki’s position to be enviable.

“.....Best regards Yamaoka-san”



After that Erika said while peeking.

“And, my name is....., did I say it yesterday?”

“Nn? Ah....., is that so?”

Ryou certainly has the memory of receiving her self-introduction, but the motivation to remember her name was non-existent, so he didn't remember the name.

That is to say, he attempted to alter his recollection so the self-introduction wasn't received.

“Eh.....? I think I said it....., therefore I thought Sakuragi-kun knew my name.....?”

He thought a black aura could be seen from behind, his instincts began to ring like an alarm bell so he apologized right away.

“No, my bad....., you weren't registered in my cellphone, and I'm not really good at remembering people's names.....”

Ryou said honestly. If you don't register in his cellphone, it is true that he would soon forget.

Then Azusa burst into laughter.

“Erika who introduces herself, to think there's a man who would forget it”

“Stop laughing, Azusa! Then, register me now and remember it!”

With those words Erika held out her phone, Ryou resigns himself, takes out his phone and they exchange with each other.

“Uh.....hm, Fujimoto Erika....., ah, that's right, it's Fujimoto-san”

While Ryou confirms it, one bread after another is brought to his mouth.

“Then, next is me”

Azusa says so while presenting her phone.

It was noticed that Saki also silently held her phone out towards Ryou.

To tell the truth, Ryou wanted to refuse, but it felt like useless efforts to try and decline, a sigh of resignation was let out.

Ryou thought that since yesterday there's an unusually high number of sighs of resignation, not thinking about it anymore, he exchanged with the two people.

Erika that was gladly looking at her phone noticed the bag besides Ryou and asked.

"Do you usually eat bread Sakuragi-kun?"

"Ah....., I don't always have them. I also go to the cafeteria or a convenience store for box lunches"

"That bag.....it looks to be full, do you always buy so much?"

"So much? It's only 10 pieces"

"10 pieces!? Wouldn't you usually have two or three?"

Azusa has an amazed expression.

"If you always have so many, don't your lunch charges pile up?"

"Well, most of my part time job money goes to meal charges....."

Ryou has an expression saying it can't be helped.

Erika was interested in Ryou's words and asked about the situation.

"You're working part time? Can you tell me what you do?"

"It's not something a high school student really does..... It'll help if you don't enquire any further about this"

"I-Is that so? Sorry.....?"

Erika at that time seemed to apologize unconsciously and her eyes become upturned.

Because Erika was in front of Ryou, he once again received a direct hit. Nervous because of that, he became flustered, averting his eyes he waves his hand saying not to worry.

Ryou, who doesn't want to take any more damage to his mind, raised the main issue with the aim to quickly disperse.

“Then, you three”

Ahem, Ryou raises his voice.

“What?”

“What is it?”

“?”

Being stared at simultaneously by three beautiful girls, because of the unusualness, Ryou felt tension as one would expect.

“Not much, I don’t want you to come to the classroom”

“Eh!? Why!?”

“Why, can I hear the reason?”

Ryou hesitant to say was scratching his head briskly said while mumbling.

“You stand out”

“Eh?”

Erika doesn’t understand the meaning of it.

“The reason is you people stand out”

Azusa is observing Ryou, looking at him.

“You don’t want us to come because we stand out, is what you said?”

Ryou nodded.

“Ah, however, you can come as you like to the classroom except if it’s to meet me. But stop coming to the classroom if you wish to see me”

Hmm....., after all....., do you not want to be stand out?”

Azusa enquired.

“Well, to be frank, that’s right. I don’t want to stand out”

“Eeh!? Th-then, because you don’t want to stand out, you made that promise yesterday?”

“Ah, because if it’s known that I helped you I would become the target of a rumor. I was impatient after helping, truly”

“Hmm, it is unknown how you helped Erika, however you will surely become the target of a rumor if it’s known you saved her from three men.

“W-Why, he would be the target of a rumor because of me?”

Erika asked with a wondering face, Ryou also asked with a wondering face.

“You, with such a super cute face that would put television idols to shame like its foul play, isn’t that the reason for saying so?”

“Eh.....”

Lost for words, Erika’s face becomes bright red.

Seeing this Ryou finds it more and more strange.

“What is it? Something like cute, aren’t you accustomed to being called that?”

When Ryou says so, even her ears become bright red.

When Ryou looks inquisitively at Azusa, she laughs in a small voice.

“No, she is surely used to it being said, but it’s from men she thinks nothing of”

Ryou, who doesn’t seem have understood the meaning of Azusa’s words well, kept talking.

“With this plain appearance of mine, I can live without attracting attention, when such a transcendent beautiful girl abruptly comes to me one morning, would it not attract attention, in fact since entering high school this is the first time I stood out....., you, are you fine?”

“I-I-It’s nothing.....”

While Erika becomes red to the neck, she squeezed out her voice.

Azusa who was enduring from bursting out in laughter, took a photo of Erika with her cellphone.

Erika starts to hide her face desperately.

“Hey, Azusa, stop.....”

Azusa ignores what Erika said and continues to take photos, and urges Ryou to continue the talk.

“Sakuragi-kun, go on”

“Ah.....? Is it fine?”

“It’s fine, go on”

Ryou clears his throat, and said a crucial part.

“Therefore, if possible I don’t want to come into contact with you people anymore.....”

Before he can finish saying so, Erika changes her facial expression, approaches Ryou, and grabs onto him.

“No! Why!?”

With a red face, she questions Ryou closely. Because of Azusa her eyes were also a little teary. Ryou seeing that sort of Erika is confused.

“No....., therefore.....you stand out.....”

“Hmm.....why would you go so far to not stand out?”

To not say anything here, would be bad, Ryou understood so and gave a reason which wasn’t a big deal.

“In middle school I was used by a bad companion, it’s hard to say it was peaceful. Therefore I want a quiet high school, not attracting attention, I only want it to be peaceful”

“Is that the reason? Boring”

Azusa says so in a displeased manner.

Ryou himself understands it is a boring reason, but he doesn’t want to stop his current life.

“Then....., is it no good to meet anymore?”

Erika, with moistened eyes asks Ryou.

Directly hit in front of his eyes by what was like a destruction beam, Ryou somehow settled down his feelings, and frankly said what he thought.

"No good....., say so, before that, is there still business with me? If you're fixated on gratitude, I'll receive juice, I thought to accept that....., to take that as gratitude, like that don't you think there's no more business?"

"Eh....., su-surely that's so!"

"You agree?"

Erika is confused and says.

"Then, then, thanks isn't given, I won't give it"

"I understand"

"Eh!?"

"Well, from the beginning, I did say it was unnecessary....."

"Ah, it's different, I'll give it! But, I won't give it....."

"Which is it.....?"

"Ah, I'll give it, but not yet!"

".....isn't it fine with juice from the vending machine around here? That'll be fine for gratitude in this case.....?"

"Juice is no good!!"

"Then, what?"

"U-hm, I haven't chosen yet!"

"....., isn't 'haven't chosen' incorrect speech? In the case now shouldn't it be 'haven't decided'?"

"It's fine, such a thing!"

"Fine then.....haa"

The laughter of Azusa who was enjoying it is raised. As usual she is taking photos with phone she's holding.

"Slowly, let's stop teasing my child"

"Teasing....., what my child. More than that you're teasing her?"

Erika who disliked it became red. Ryou who saw her forcibly taking photos was certain. Ryou was convinced. Azusa is very much a sadist.

Azusa disregards Ryou's question, and restarts the conversation.

"Let's return to the talk. You don't want to stand out, therefore don't want to meet us in your class"

“Ah, as much as possible don’t want to be seen in front of school people”

“So to begin with for the business of receiving Erika’s thanks it is necessary to meet up?”

“I guess? It is unnatural for you beautiful girls like you to come meet me”

Then, Azusa’s eyes shone with a flash of light.

“What is unnatural?”

“Well, I have a plain appearance don’t I? For people like yourselves with a shining appearance, it’s natural for people with a suitable appearance to be by besides you. Don’t actual attractive guys approach your surroundings?”

Azusa nodded.

“Though I don’t deny that, who we’re together with, appearance, nature or if it’s unnatural makes no difference, it is us who decide”

Ryou also can’t deny that.

“Well, certainly”

“And, if Erika doesn’t have any business with you, it’s said there’s no reason to meet, if it’s the opposite and there is business to meet for will it be fine?”

Ryou felt himself being pressed.

“Well....., certainly”

“Besides, to begin with high school students don’t need business to meet.

Because they want to meet, because they want to play together, because they are happy together, those are reasons enough to meet. Do you differ?”

“I don’t differ, because I don’t want to stand out, didn’t I say I didn’t want to meet?”

“However, because it is enjoyable for us with you here, we want to have lunch together with you this way again, that’s what we think. Isn’t it, Erika?”

Erika nodded vigorously.

“That’s right!”

Ryou saw Saki who nodded.

Are these three serious about what they said, Ryou asked truly doubtful.

“....., are you serious about what you said.....?”

The three nodded at once.

“I’m serious

“I’m really serious”

“Serious”

At the end Saki opened her mouth, Erika and Azusa looked surprised.

Ryou, looking at their state and that it seems to be the truth, was understood.

Having understood the circumstance, troubled about what to do, he scratched his head.

“Why, to think...I would.....”

Azusa suddenly noticed something said.

“Not taking standing out into consideration, do you find it unpleasant being with us?”

Ryou thought about it a little, and said what was on his mind.

No, it’s not like it’s unpleasant. Looking at it plainly, it’s above all a feast for my eyes”

To Ryou’s words, Erika immediately responded.

“Really!?”

To the volume of Erika’s reaction, Ryou was perplexed.

“A-Ah.....”

“Hmm, you’re unusual. Usually when a man would be surrounded by us three, they would become somewhat nervous, but you say such things in a dignified manner”

“Is that so, that’s informative”



Ryou shrugs his shoulders while saying so seriously.

Azusa laughs in a small eerie voice.

“Fufufufu, you are after all, interesting. It seems my thoughts weren’t incorrect”

Feeling that his statement may have been rash, Ryou shed a cold sweat.

“Looking at you now, do you want to withdraw the validity of your ‘not unpleasant’ statement?”

“No, he can’t. How about it then? Don’t you feel you want to meet with us again?”

“Even saying so, that you won’t attract attention, can certainly not be said. Any more than this is pointless”

Azusa glanced at Erika and nodded.

“It certainly is so. Then what if it’s not under public gaze? This rooftop and yesterday, the back street which you and Erika returned home through.

Before he became aware his way was blocked, and Ryou noticed he was thoroughly defeat by the woman in front of his eyes.

Turning his eyes to Azusa, she returns a nihilistic laugh.

Turning his eyes to Saki, she was expressionless, and only the glance was punctually returned.

Turning his eyes to Erika, eyes filled with expectation were pointed towards him.

Ryou let out a large sigh.

“If you go so far to say that....., if it’s on the way back home, I don’t know, as much as possible I would like to decline.....if it’s like this on the rooftop then its fine”

Azusa smiles from ear to ear, and Erika gave a cheer.

“Really!?”

Ryou said while flustered by Erika who approached.

“Ah....., but, will you earnestly not come to the classroom? Also when we meet in the hallway to look the other way”

Only here, Ryou cannot yield.

Erika with a discontent look on her face says.

“Even in the hallway.....?”

“Isn’t it because rumors would spread quickly from the hallways?”

Azusa calmed Erika down.

“Erika, this must be done step by step. For now, let’s compromise with this”

“....., I see”

Erika, who was reluctant, nodded.

Ryou breathed in relief. To some points of Azusa’s words, he felt worry, but for the time being, he avoided attracting more attention than he was necessary.

To the Ryou who took a breather, ah, that’s right, Azusa who saw that state said.

“By the way, return home with us together today. I want to show the thanks from me for helping a close friend.

“Gratitude, again? Also, pardon me as much as possible about returning, didn’t I say just a bit ago.....?”

“That it’s preferable? Because it wasn’t said so for a while keep company with us today”

“That’s so, you ran away yesterday, today return home together with us”

Erika who seemed to recall yesterday, suddenly agreed with Azusa in calm tone.

Ryou with a puzzled look shifted his attention to Erika whose mood abruptly changed.

“How.....? You”

Erika smiled happily.

“Sakuragi-kun, you left me yesterday when I was returning home”

“A-ah.....”

“What if a girl was attacked? Is it hopeless, even a little to expect you to escort home, is it strange?”

“Err, it’s not strange.....”

Ryou has his breath taken away when he sees Erika’s state.

“Is that so? I am attacked, but received help. It can be scary after that, to be alone”

Emphasis was put on the ‘to be alone’ part.

“Ah, yeah. Well, I’m sor.....”

Before Ryou finishes speaking, Azusa intervened while shaking her head.

“Don’t say so, Erika. Even he would worry for the next day. He was worried. Not for Erika, for himself”

Emphasis was clearly and distinctively put on the ‘for himself’ part.

Though the smile on Erika’s face deepened, her eyes weren’t smiling and Ryou noticed he had no reinforcements. Towards the reinforcement observation, he clearly felt his mouth cramp.

“Uh, sorry, you two, please forgive me quickly”

“That’s what is said, Erika?”

Without a change in her mood Erika says.

“Are you returning with us today?”

Ryou nodded immediately.

“Of course”

Erika who heard those words showed a true smile this time.

“That’s great”

(To so suddenly blossom into smiling face like that.....)

While leaking a breath in relief, seeing Erika’s smile and coming close to being charmed, he looked away in a panic.

Casually looking at his wristwatch, it was seen that lunch break had almost ended, Ryou said while standing up.

“Lunch break, has already finished. I’ll leave ahead. You have a key? Is it fine to ask you to lock it?”

Azusa nodded.

“It’s fine. Then return. And wait in the back street”

Ryou answered, yes, and left the roof.

Erika turned her body to Azusa and bowed her head.

“Thank you, Azusa”

“Don’t mind it. I was able to take cute photos of Erika, I’m satisfied”

“Is that so, wait, delete those photos!”

“No good”

“Geez, you always, always!”

“There’s no helping it, it’s my purpose in life”

“Don’t live for such a thing!”

The two quarrel, while they put away the sheet and their lunch,

Saki smiled seeing them, while helping to tidy up.

When he entered the classroom five minutes before the end of lunch break, Ryou was again surrounded by classmates.

“Did you exchange phone numbers!?” “What was the expression of gratitude!?”

While retreating from the persecution of questions, he told them he only got juice as thanks and separated at once and phone numbers weren't exchanged.

That's good, seeing the glances of the classmates who looked at him and were feeling relieved, Ryou made a triumphant pose in his mind for the success towards his plain and ordinary life.



## Chapter 5 – Unconscious Thumbs Up

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After school, Ryou stopped and was waiting along the back street.

(Why, did it come to this....., is it the fault of those guys from yesterday? Was my manner of doing things wrong....., no, it's the fault of those guys. I wonder if I won't see them around this area, if I see them in the background I'll dropkick them. No, rather I should call them.....)

While Ryou was thinking of dangerous things, three people came into his sights.

"You waited properly"

Azusa says so with a well done expression to Ryou.

"Sorry, did you wait?"

Erika says so apologetically. In truth, Ryou had waited for approximately 20 minutes.

Ryou shrugged his shoulders.

"It's fine, there's nothing particularly scheduled. Beside I'll follow what I promised"

"That's a good attitude"

Azusa nods, and when she suddenly notices something she said.

"Which reminds me, the promise that Erika made to you yesterday. Isn't it fine to hear the details of yesterday from you?"

"Ahh....., it may be fine, but I don't want to talk about the subject myself..... It's fine you, you can say"

Ryou was muttering to himself, but the final words were said when he turned his neck towards Erika.

Erika showed a little surprise on her face.

“It’s ok?”

“Ah, even if we remain silent, I have a feeling this woman would find out someday”

While saying so, Ryou glances at Azusa, and she laughs happily.

“Why would you think so?”

“Intuition”

Azusa who heard so laughed furthermore and Erika nodded her head in admiration.

“Certainly if it’s Azusa.....”

As expected, Ryou who thought so, determined to furthermore strengthen his wariness of Azusa.

“Then, should I call today?”

When Erika asks Azusa, Azusa nods.

While walking and chatting for a few minutes, Ryou didn’t neglect being vigilant of the surrounding.

Vigilant of what, the sight of other students of course.

If he senses the presence of other students, Ryou intends to immediately hide himself.

Moreover, Ryou noticed that even his spirit had become a little cheerful.

(However these three, are really pretty....., since entering high school I haven’t spoken much with girls)

While he was thinking so absentmindedly, Azusa called out to him.

“That’s right, I want you to accept my reward”

“Reward? For what?”

“Of course, as thanks for helping a close friend”

Erika quickly says

“On that subject, what to do for my thanks”

Ryou said while shaking his head.

“Juice is fine”

“Yesterday I heard Erika’s story about her gratitude, and was consulted with, right, Erika?”

“Then, do what you wish to”

About the gratitude from the people besides him, Ryou started to worry.

Erika enquires towards Azusa.

“A reward from Azusa.....?”

“Ah....., Sakuragi-kun, will you come here for a moment?”

Ryou was cautious.

“Why?”

“It’s fine, it’s nothing bad”

Though Ryou is cautious, he moved back with Azusa, and they started to go along the road together.

“Hey, Azusa.....?”

“Sorry, just for a little, can you two wait there”

Azusa says so towards Erika and Saki, while walking with Ryou.

Azusa while looking back many times, measures the distance, and stopped in place when Erika and Saki’s faces could just barely be made out.

“This spot.....is good, can you lend me your glasses for a bit?”

“Huh? For what.....”

“It’s fine, so lend it”

Though Ryou couldn’t let go of the bad feeling he was having, taking of his non-prescription glasses, he passed them to Azusa.



“Thanks....., ah, look at Erika”

Ryou who doesn't know what on earth is happening, while vigilant of his surroundings, paid attention to Erika as he was told.

Thereupon, Azusa takes out her phone, a mechanical 'click' sound is made and it is turned towards the two. At the same time Azusa raised her hand.

Seeing Azusa who raised her hand, Saki moved.

Ryou observed the nature of what was happening. Saki who was standing diagonally behind Erika, bent down, and in one go she lifted up Erika's skirt.

The skirt was magnificently lifted upwards.

“Eh”

A small voice leaked out from Erika with the sound of her skirt fluttering. Ryou's eyes turn into dots, that spectacle, the spectacle of that moment was certainly seen.

Erika has a facial expression of not understanding what has happened.

After looking at the face of such an Erika, Saki expressionlessly turns her head towards Ryou, and thrust out her hand with only her thumb up.

Ryou who understood that it was raised towards himself, unconsciously in the same way as Saki, returned the thumbs up. Though it was unconscious, it was done with great vigor.

Looking at the thumbs up of the two, Erika finally came back to reality, ah-a-ah, while moaning both hand are slowly applied on her reddened cheeks, 'kyaaaaaa' she shrieks, turns her back and runs. A splendid Doppler effect was left behind.

Saki who saw off such an Erika this time made a thumbs up towards Azusa, who returned it similarly.

Seeing Azusa's thumbs up Saki nodded, and ran after Erika.

Ryou is dumbfounded by the outcome of the situation, from his side he could hear muttering, shifting his attention to Azusa, she was holding her phone up with an expression of ecstasy while muttering.

“Ah, how adorable....., there’s absolutely no other such of an adorable creature.....”

Ryou instinctively took a step back.

While noticing Ryou, Azusa puts away her phone, and asks him.

“Did you see?”

Probably because of the scene from earlier which was burned into his eyes, Ryou wasn’t aware he was a state of high tension. His mouth moved on its own.

“Red and white checkered”

“Hmm, that was the reward from Saki and I for helping our close friend”

“You’re awful. But I thought that girl was splendidly wearing tights, was it you by chance?”

“That’s so, Erika put them on today. However, before leaving school, I said that I might possibly be moving around a lot with my legs, so she took them off and lent them to me. Erika’s tights are currently being worn by me.”

“So that’s why you were late. You, you’re a villain”

Ryou from the bottom of his heart, felt that the woman before his eyes was terrifying.

“You saying do is an honor”

“What does that mean?”

“The meaning is what it is. Besides I can see clearly from this distance, these glasses of yours seem to be non-prescription”

Azusa says so while raising Ryou’s glasses.

Ryou remembered that he currently isn’t wearing his glasses.

“Ah....., damn it. Well, fine..... You’re wicked”

“When it’s said by you, I can only hear it as a compliment”

“More or less, it is praise. It’s the first time in my life I felt from the bottom of my heart that a woman is terrifying”

Azusa gave a truly delightful laugh. Seeing such a Azusa Ryou’s eyes opened wide.

“You really are interesting. Then I’ll be leaving before Erika starts to worry. You must not come”

Ryou receives his glasses, replies that he understands, and sees Azusa running off.

“When that woman laughs earnestly, she’s cute....., though the point of her laughter still feels strange”

Ryou who was left alone muttered so seriously.

“Sorry, Erika. Forgive me, it won’t happen again”  
“I absolutely won’t forgive you”

Erika, while pouting, refuses.

After that happened Saki caught Erika who had stopped in front of the station, and Azusa caught up. She was apologized to many times, but after all they weren’t forgiven. Erika who went down to the station separated with them, and they returned to their mutual homes.

Yesterday it was Erika who had called, at the same time of a bit past 8 ‘o clock, Erika received a call.

At first Erika didn’t answer the phone, but her patience was exhausted by Azusa’s persistence and by the fifth time hearing her ringtone, she answered.

“Then, what would it take to forgive me?”

“No matter what, I won’t. It’s unbelievable, that was the reason for taking off my tights”

“Ah, you found out?”

Tee hee, hearing the onomatopoeia noise Azusa made, Erika’s anger increasingly welled up.

“Why, like that....., also in front of him.....”

Recalling that time, Erika’s voice tapers near the end and becomes soft.

“It was intended to be a reward from Saki and I. He seems to have been very pleased”

“Hey! What is that!! I’m nothing like a pervert!!”

“It’s alright, he won’t think such a thing”

“Such a thing, you don’t know!!”

“It’s really alright. After that, it was expressed that I was a villain”

“Th-that’s wonderful.....”

Reflexively, Erika forgot her anger and replied. Saying such a terrible thing to her close friend, was a very bold act.

“That’s a mean thing to say”

“....., but, I agree”

Muttering just a few words, Erika’s true opinion was let out.

“.....”

He-hey, Azusa!? Why are you silent!?”

When her close friend suddenly became silent, Erika panicked.

“I was called mean by Erika.....”

Azusa says so while sighing.

“Wh-what....., it’s me, who still has a reason to be angry!”

“Then, you won’t forgive me for displaying you panties for him? .....oh well, it’ll just be the two of us in a room with a bed”

“Wh-wh-what are you saying! That’s absolutely no good!!”

“Then, will you forgive me?”

“.....fine! If I keep waiting to, it’ll be the end of our friendship!!”

“I’m glad, thank you, I love you, Erika”

Azusa sincerely felt relieved that Erika’s anger had calmed down.

“Next time, treat me to something”

“Of course, as much as you like”

After that, Erika spoke in detail to Azusa about what happened yesterday.



## Chapter 6 – Appropriate Compensation

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“Physical fitness measurements?”

The puzzled voice of Ryou resounded on the rooftop during lunch break.

In that place, Erika, Azusa and Saki are again having their lunch together.

The three have boxed lunches while Ryou has bread in hand.

This morning, while listening absentmindedly in class, Ryou thought that because he had eaten bread yesterday, today he would eat a bowl of fried rice topped with chicken and egg with noodles in the cafeteria.

The school cafeteria is something really good for students.

It's cheap, delicious, and rarely unappetizing.

For Ryou whose default is to eat enough food portions for three people, the school cafeteria is a place close to heaven.

Alright, today it's the cafeteria. Determined to do so, his phone vibrates, checking the contents of the mail, it was from Azusa about having lunch together on the roof.

Ryou, whose stomach already has business with the cafeteria, faces to go eat at the cafeteria. After replying, right away, a word for word, identical, without any changes mail as the one from earlier was returned.

Having no choice, a breath of resignation is let out, and a reply of consent was given.

Once again, a large quantity of bread is bought (a boxed lunch or rice balls weren't purchased). When the three on the rooftop began to eat, Azusa asks Ryou right away about the physical fitness measurements, Ryou's puzzled voice from earlier was the reply.

Azusa nods and asks again.

“That’s right, why were there such results?”

“Such results? Didn’t I get a regular B? What’s strange about getting a B?”

“That’s your total average. Your average on the first day last year was C and the second day’s average was A. First day this year’s average was A and second day’s average was C. The average of last and this year are both B. The order of the measurement tests are the same this year as they were last year. An A is gotten, and then a C is gotten. If this isn’t peculiar, then what is.”

“First day, second day...? Aah, that reminds me, it was divided amongst two days..., A to C? I understand the C, but was there an A?”

“That’s right, haven’t you seen your results?”

“I saw, but only that there was a B besides my name. Because of that I felt relieved, but to think there was an A...”

The results of the physical fitness tests are listed on a sheet of paper, with the overall average result of the two days next to the name, and further details are recorded below that.

Ryou who only looked at the overall result was relieved, and recalled throwing it away in the trash.

“Why are there such results?”

When Azusa questions him once more, Ryou shrugs his shoulders and answers.

“Pretty much for those two days, I aimed at a getting a B.... Why it became such a result on that day isn’t clear. I looked for a guy whose reflexes didn’t seem to be good, and I only got the same result as that person. However, for an A to be mixed in..., after all, I guess you can’t tell if a person’s reflexes are good based on their face...”

He says the last words anxiously while shaking his head.

Towards that answer, Azusa returned a reasonable question.

“Why were you so particular about getting such poor-looking results?”

“A good result would stand out. It would be unpleasant to be invited to sports clubs.”

"That way of speaking, you seem to be confident in your reflexes."

"Moderately. Actually if I put together last year and this year's results, I guess I could get an A on both?"

"I agree."

"I think the question should be why you are aware of my physical fitness results..."

"That's a trivial matter, don't worry about it. Apart from that, I'm inclined to hear about your true physical ability..."

"Even if you ask that, to run around in this heat would stand out so I'll never do that."

"Well, sooner or later I'll have a chance to see it."

"I won't do it, it's bothersome so I won't do it."

"Don't say such a cold thing."

"Really..., leaving that aside, what's up with her."

While saying so, Ryou turns his neck towards Erika.

Erika didn't participate in the conversation Ryou and Azusa just had. After Ryou showed up, she dropped her head and was pinning down her skirt while fidgeting.

"Her...? Isn't she lovely, is something the problem?"

Azusa shifts her attention to Erika with a look of ecstasy in her face.

"I'll admit she's lovely. Aah I can guess why it turned out like this. So tell me what I need to say."

Ryou said so strongly.

Thinking about that moment yesterday, Ryou believes it's that which led to this.

In fact, it is so. Though Ryou is mindful of what he saw, it would be strange for him to apologize. In reality, Ryou didn't do anything, hence it can be said he only looked. On the other hand if he's feelings of gratitude for that were to surface, things could become unnecessarily bad, so Ryou doesn't know what to do. But he understands he only has to permanently save the spectacle he saw yesterday in a folder in his brain.

"Hmm..., I think you should quickly call out to her."



Azusa said so after a bit of hesitation.

“Call out?”

Ryou is surprised and asked back.

“Ah, don’t forget to call her by name.”

Azusa said happily.

“Name? Was it Fujimoto-san...”

Ryou muttered while recalling it.

“It’s different, different. First name. Call her Erika.”

Azusa laughs more happily.

“Eh..., isn’t the family name fine?”

Ryou said so slightly confused.

“That’s no good. If it’s not her name, there will be no reaction.”

“..., is that true...?”

Ryou asks quite doubtfully.

“It’s true.”

Azusa nodded without hesitation.

“Haa..., E..., ahem, E-Erika.”

While Ryou stammers, he called out to Erika in a soft voice while becoming slightly red.

However, Erika is still looking downwards.

“You’re voice is too soft, she can’t hear it.”

Azusa says knitting her eyebrows.

"I know. E..., Erika!"

Ryou bashfully repeats his words and calls out Erika's name more strongly than last time.

Erika who was visibly surprised turned to Ryou.

"Yes!? Sa-Sakuragi-kun...? That, just now, did you call me?"

"Aah, no..., your box lunch will get cold, shouldn't you eat?"

Ryou said so deceptively while looking at what Erika's hand was holding.

Azusa looks at such a Ryou with interest, and Ryou who had a premonition absolutely wouldn't match eyes with Azusa.

"...? Oh well..."

Tilting her neck a little, Erika paid attention to what she was holding, and started to move the hand which had halted.

Ryou seeing Erika's box lunch said.

"However, that box lunch looks delicious. Your mother is skillful at cooking."

"Ah..., this is..."

When Ryou who sees Erika being slightly hesitant to speak looks puzzled, Azusa opened her mouth.

"Erika's box lunch was made by her own hands."

"By herself!? Heh..., that's amazing."

Ryou seriously felt admiration.

"Th-thank you"

Erika was embarrassed, but says so delightfully.

"Doesn't Sakuragi-kun bring box lunches?"

Shaking off her embarrassment, Erika asked Ryou.

“Me? ...Now that you say so, I haven’t had a homemade box lunch in a long time..., though I do occasionally get them from a convenience store.”

Ryou with a slightly distant look says so.

Seeing such a Ryou, something was felt, furthermore hearing so, Erika offered her box lunch to Ryou.

“If you would like, won’t you eat?”

In that instant Ryou’s eyes became dots and immediately while waving his hand laughingly said.

“No, it’s fine. I’ve already eaten bread, besides I would feel bad to accept something so small.”

Erika tilts her head in thought.

“Really? This here is plenty for a girl...”

“That’s great. For me I would need at least three times, no five times as much? I would need to eat that much or my stomach won’t be filled.”

“Five times...!”

Erika says so in surprise, and Azusa also astonished shifts her attention.

“Your body’s fuel consumption is quite bad.”

“Yeeeah, I can’t deny that. But won’t all men find the size of your box lunch insufficient?”

Ryou looking at the size of Erika’s box lunch says so. By Ryou’s judgement, it’s a very small and lovely size, but seems to be about half of a man’s larger box lunch.

“Even so, five times this is overeating...”

“Truly....., don’t you grow fat?”

Azusa in agreement with Erika asks what any girl would be mindful of.

“Well, I won’t grow fat.”

“I’m jealous...”

Erika says so while sighing, Azusa was also in agreement.

“Truly..., by the way I heard about the time you helped Erika.....”

Ryou smiles wryly.

“That’s a sudden change in topic.”

“Don’t mind it. I heard Erika’s story, so please accept another expression of gratitude”

“Yes. Accept it.”

Erika promptly agrees.

“If it gratitude then I received it. A sufficiently sincere ‘thank you’ was implied from the words I heard...”

Azusa shook her head.

“After all, you don’t understand.”

“I don’t understand what it is. Besides I said yesterday juice would be fine for a reward.”

“Therefore, you don’t understand. Is it fine? The day before yesterday, it can be said that you protected the virginity of Erika.”

When Azusa’s words were heard, Erika’s face goes bright red and in a fluster tries to stop her.

“He-hey, Azusa!?”

Glancing sideways at Erika, Ryou calmly asked back.

“She’s a virgin?”

Azusa nodded slowly.

“Ah, by the way she’s an innocent 16 years-old high school girl of genuine purity yet to even kiss.”

“...! .....!”

Erika screams but it doesn't come out.

Ryou's eyes shone a little.

"She's yet to kiss."

Azusa folds her arms while nodding with her face which had become serious.

"That's right."

Ryou shakes his head and with an unusually serious voice says.

"Is it like that..."

"Don't you believe it?"

"Ah..., that is, isn't there a boyfriend?"

Ryou suddenly says what he had noticed. Erika who at last came to be able speak, strongly denied it while bright red.

There isn't! Hey, Azusa!? Why are you saying such a thing here!?"

"Ah, that's how it is."

Azusa who remembered something strikes her hand with a \*tap\* and said to Ryou.

"In other words, it can be said you defended Erika's first kiss and virginity, it's strange to say that juice is alright for a reward. Do you not think it really isn't worth it?"

Erika, whose face gets more and more red from Azusa's statements, tries to stop Azusa from the side and cover her mouth with her hand, but Azusa effortlessly avoids it.

As one would expect, Ryou is a little embarrassed and his face is a bit red.

"No, how about this? If I didn't help, and she's taken, then someone along the way might have helped, or there might have been an opportunity to run away by herself."

While both her hands are suppressing Erika, Azusa nods and said.

“Ah, that’s a possibility. But in the end you did help. That is Erika’s first kiss and virginity.”

Absolutely, it was purposely repeated, Ryou could feel it.

“Well, it is so when considering the worst case scenario.”

While holding the wriggling Erika, Azusa furthermore says strongly.

“Erika’s first kiss and virginity. I’ll absolutely not consider juice being a good compensation for defending that.”

Ryou who felt a little sympathy for the struggling Erika within both of Azusa’s hands, nodded.

“Ah..., well, I understand juice is no good...then, what is...?”

“Yeah, Erika’s first kiss and virginity. ‘.....’ when I say corresponding compensation, it must be suitably returned. I will think about it carefully.”

You’re still saying it, this sadist. Ryou silently looks at her face with astonishment, but Azusa does not waver.

Erika seems to have given up on resisting and isn’t moving.

Her face red hot with watery eyes, out of breath she is settled inside Azusa’s arms.

Seeing that sort of Erika, and thinking it to be unreasonably lovely, would he also be a sadist after all, no, but this scheming person seems to be, Ryou answered his own question when Azusa asked Erika a question with a face filled of affection.

“Have you calmed down? Erika.”

“Y-you...!!”

Within Azusa’s arms, Erika trembles with watery eyes and scowls at Azusa.

Azusa who had seen that, smiled furthermore.

“Ah, cute. Erika, I love you.”

While saying so she brings her cheek against Erika's cheek and rubs against it.

"Enough, Azusa, stop it! Sakuragi-kun, is looking at us strangely!!!"

"Ah, no, don't worry about me..., I, need to be going..."

Erika, in a panic, called out to Ryou who stands up slowly in this atmosphere to detain him.

"Please, Sakuragi-kun! Don't go! Don't misunderstand! Really, really don't misunderstand!!"

"A-ah..."

Because of the intensity of Erika's angry look, Ryou reflexively stopped his feet and sat down in place again.

When Ryou sat down again, Erika made a face of having felt relief from the bottom of her heart. While settling down she separated from the unwilling Azusa's arms.

"Enough, Azusa, stop already..., anyway, let me give my thanks another way please."

Erika doesn't make much eye contact with Ryou, while her face reddens slightly, bowed her head.

"A-ah..., likewise."

Ryou without thinking, bowed.

While reluctant to look away from Erika, Azusa looks at her watch and says.

"It's time already. By the way, Sakuragi-kun, do you have anything scheduled for Saturday tomorrow or the day after?"

"Azusa?"

Erika turned towards Azusa with suspicious eyes.

Ryou while being wary, asked

“Eh...hm, what for?”

“You don’t have to be so cautious, it’s because there may be something to do with Erika’s gratitude.”

“Is it like that..., if it’s this weekend..., both days are open.”

Ryou, who was recalling so, answered.

Is that so, then if possible keep Sunday empty as it is.”

“I got it... Then, as before, I’ll be going. See ya.”

Saying so, Ryou left the rooftop.

Erika, who confirmed that Ryou had left, faced towards Azusa.

“What are you doing on Sunday?”

Azusa makes a face of being surprised, and smiled.

“Not me, it’s you. Erika is also free on Sunday.”

“It’s me!?”

Erika’s surprised voice resounded throughout the rooftop.

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## Chapter 7 – Is Breakfast the Reward?

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After school that day, because Ryou wasn't invited, he is returning home alone. Thinking that since he is alone today he can return slowly, he faced in the direction of the back street.

This back street has few pedestrians, and students of the same school are also seldom seen. This is because it is a detour on the way to the station.

However, occasionally students of a neighboring high school pass by. Perhaps the students of that school take this detour along this way so they can return while smoking, Ryou assesses.

In fact, Ryou has witnessed that scene several times. Though there is no one who quarrels with Ryou who doesn't stand out, once in a while he sees students of his school being quarreled with. If that person is a man he ignores it, if it's a girl, he'll go help like he had twice in the past. Erika is the third time.

For such a reason, there are really few persons who go along this back street.

Because there was no invitation, he thinks the three would return on the main street as usual so he chose to go home along this back street. When he entered into the back street and had seen Erika standing there he received a surprise attack and felt uneasy.

Erika who notices Ryou, smiles pleasantly, approaches him and asked.

"Is it fine to return together?"

Meeting like this he thinks he can't refuse, giving a reply of consent the two began to walk together.

A few minutes after they began to walk, the two were silent. For Ryou the silence was comforting and not a bad thing.

Perhaps, thinking his plain self is being shown, he glances at the girl next to him, their eyes meet at once.

When their eyes meet Erika goes, Hn?, and tilts her head looking at Ryou. Ryou, who became embarrassed, opened his mouth while flustered.

“Co-come to think of it, you, the day before yesterday you were alone on this street, don’t you three always return home together?”

“When it possible for us three to return together we do. Azusa’s been in the student council since first year and Saki’s in the handicrafts club, so there aren’t many times we three return together.”

“Heh? Student council and handicrafts club..., it suits, I guess. Did you not enter into any club activities?”

“Yes, I didn’t enter any. But I was invited to enter the student council in the second term by Azusa. Did Sakuragi-kun enter... ah, you don’t want to attract attention, that would be bothersome and unpleasant.”

When answering so, she said everything he was going to say, Ryou reflexively smiled wryly.

“Right, besides it’s not like I’m particularly fond of sports. ...the student council seems to be difficult I would decline.”

“I don’t know whether or not it is difficult, Azusa likely will become the student council president next term, and said she wanted me to lend a hand. Oh well, if it’s difficult I’ll do my best.”

“That woman as student council president? ....., is that so, do your best.”

When Azusa becomes student council president, at that moment won’t the student council will feel like an evil organization, Ryou questions in his imagination.

“What aren’t you saying?”

Erika looks at Ryou inquisitively.

“Nah, nothing.”

Erika smiles and chuckles towards Ryou’s brief reply.

When smiling she becomes more and more lovely, it’s quite a bit of a dangerous weapon, Ryou thinks so and recalls what he wanted to say.

“Even so, to go on this back street.”

“Hm, what is it?”

“Shouldn’t you stop returning alone? Students of other schools go along here and it’s not rare to get into fights on this back street.”

“Are you worried? Fufu, thanks.”

Because it was said while looking delighted, Ryou emphasized what he said.

“Did you really hear what I said? I hope you’re aware as you encountered it. Anyway, will you stop going along this street alone?”

“Ookay, I get it.”

Finding Ryou’s serious words amusing, Erika answered while smiling in a carefree voice.

“Do you really understand?”

Ryou asks doubtfully and

“I do understand, I only have to go along with Sakuragi-kun when I go through here.”

was replied. Ryou who heard that is lost on what to say because it certainly is safe going together with himself.

“Haa..., on that subject why were you alone?”

This was something which Ryou felt uneasy about since the day before yesterday.

A lone girl is rarely seen going along this street. Yet the day before yesterday Erika was alone on this street.

Erika answered while thinking a little.

“That is, perhaps the same reason as Sakuragi-kun.”

“What?”

“I wanted to be alone, sometimes I get sick of being stared at.”

“..., I see.”

If such a girl walks alone, friends, classmates and former classmates, the people who know her scramble to call out to her. Especially men. Ryou who sympathized with Erika's words to some extent, asked so as to poke fun at her.

"Are you self-conscious about being stared at?"

"Well, yeah. It's not like I'm displeased with my own appearance. But sometimes I wish I could become invisible."

Erika shrugged her shoulders and answered.

If the appearance is good, troubles such as that are natural. While Ryou is thinking so, Erika peeps at him and says.

"Therefore, don't you want to occasionally return home together on this street?"

"Haha, I'm your cover."

Ryou says so while smiling wryly.

"It's somewhat for that, but not only for that."

Erika denies it in a hurry.

"What do you mean?"

Ryou who thinks what is it then, asks again.

"Hmm, something like it's calming?"

"Why's that question?"

"Why is it I wonder?"

Erika says so playfully, and then her facial expression immediately changes and she says worryingly.

"Maybe because Sakuragi-kun acts naturally...? Something like that. There's a composed atmosphere that's transmitted. When I was saved at that time I felt relaxed straight away."

"Is, is that so?"

Perhaps because of the shining praise he was strangely embarrassed and stammered. He himself thinks he isn't quite calm.

"Yeah. That's why, if it's not unreasonable to talk like this together, it's calming."

"Heehh? That's the first time such a thing was said."

"Really, Then I'm glad..."

Erika who is really delighted says so, thinking what made her so happy, Ryou shyly tilts his head to face the other side and says.

"Well it's fine if it's once in a while. As a cover or as a relaxation room, make use of it as you like."

"Fufu, what is that. However, thank you."

Erika who says so smiles sweetly, for Ryou it was a strangely radiant sight.

When approaching the station Ryou made sure that Erika went in before him.

As for why she went ahead, is because he doesn't want the students in front of the station to see them together. Ryou's intention to not stand out was sympathized with.

Ryou, who made sure of that, faced the station after a short while to return home. He looked puzzled as Erika's smiling face wouldn't leave his head.

Two days later on Sunday morning 9 AM, crossing the five stations from home to get to the bustling school station, Ryou who was rubbing his drowsy eyes got off.

At one o'clock late at night the previous day (to be accurate it was 1AM today) a mail from Azusa was received.

The contents were for the sake of Erika's reward, something about coming to this place.

As usual his part time work which disregards the Labor Standards Act, abruptly called Ryou the previous Saturday evening and was made to work until midnight. Asleep when the mail came, he was woken up by it. After

confirming that it was fine, why does it have to be at nine!? Ryou retorted but there was no one to hear it.

On days off, Ryou would usually sleep until noon, all the more if he had to work until midnight the previous day.

Ryou, who came for the reward, wonders if it'll be a meal somewhere. The juice idea which was denied came to Ryou's mind.

Ryou who was directed to come in the morning at such a time, 'is the reward breakfast?' muttered to himself.

Ryou feeling fatigue and a lack of sleep from his part time work somehow raised his body, going towards the meeting place, he arrived before long.

While yawning, Ryou once again confirms the mail on his phone, the meeting place is the fountain plaza in front of the station.

Looking around and observing the fountain plaza, the person who is waiting was found in an instant.

Looking ahead, it's as if one person was basking in a spotlight, the men looking at Erika whispering in a roundabout manner results in it being even more conspicuous.

Guessing that playboys tried to pick her up, Ryou goes towards that focus point putting aside his low motivation. Resolving to greet and join her before it becomes something complicated, he jogs towards Erika.

Erika is dressed in a light pink ankle-length dress with a simple flower pattern and a white cardigan, Ryou had seen that figure felt it gave off quite a feeling of coolness. Though there was a bit of a regretful feeling that the bare legs couldn't be seen.

Erika cast her eyes downwards slightly to look at her watch, when Ryou runs up to her, she looks up at once. Opening her mouth about to smile, her eyes becomes points, and her half-open mouth stiffened.

Ryou seeing that state tilts his head, and notices that Erika's hairstyle is different to what he normally sees.

Usually the long and soft hair is loose, but today it is tied up to the side in a tail over the shoulder.

(Side ponytail? I like this hairstyle. If a ponytail is number one, then this is the runner-up)

While Ryou is thinking inside Erika is extra lovely and looking in admiration, Erika opened her mouth which had stiffened.

“Sakuragi-kun...? Is it?”

“Eh, ah, what is it? Ah..., is it because I’m not wearing my glasses?”

“No, I’ve seen it before, though there is that. Apart from that your hair is completely different, for a moment I didn’t recognize you.”

“Heh? Ah..., it’s normally like this when I don’t go to school.”

Today’s Ryou who didn’t go to school, because Erika is aware of his ordinary self, he isn’t wearing his non-prescription glasses.

Usually he would use hair wax on his short hair so as to settle down his bed hair, but now it is standing up in several places.

His clothes are jeans, a white shirt with a plain black inner top, an appearance that was nothing special to the eyes.

For Ryou whose appearance doesn’t stand out at school this was suitable, in middle school this was his standard appearance. At the same time it was also insurance in case he was seen standing side-by-side with Erika by people from school. So he can decrease the chances of people noticing him when he’s next to Erika. Ryou thinks that from a distance he will not be recognized immediately. In any case, it’s not like a lot of people would recognize Ryou anyway.

Erika who is a little bit excited says.

“Your impression has changed a lot. It looks good.”

Feeling a bit of pressure from Erika’s straightforward praise, he thinks it’s not to that extent, and thrust out what was on his mind.

“No..., thanks. You as well, that hairstyle suits you. It’s lovely.”

Erika who was praised, probably because of embarrassment from him saying his true opinions, started to leak out tears.

“Eh? Th-thanks.”

In that moment, when Erika with a slightly red face and vacant look from shyness, said her thanks, the two stayed silent.

After meeting they praised one another and it turns into a strange atmosphere where it's difficult to open their mouths, Erika spoke first.

“Sakuragi-kun, are you always like this on days you're off from school?”

Like that Ryou understands right away she's pointing out his hairstyle and glasses.

“Ah, when I meet the guys on days off from school it's the same appearance as the one at school.”

“IS that so? Then, am I the first from school? To meet Sakuragi-kun in this appearance.”

“Eh...? Ah, that's right.”

Ryou who recalled it being so nodded.

“That's so.”

Erika smiles delightfully.

What is she so glad about, Ryou who thinks so is puzzled. Thinking about it shortly, today's schedule was heard.

“By the way, what is it today? Is it breakfast?”

“Eh!? Breakfast!?”

Erika who thinks differently raises her voice wildly. Then what is it, Ryou thought.

“No, I thought the reward was breakfast, because it's the morning. By this situation it seems to be different.”

Erika who heard what Ryou was thinking let out a laugh.



"It's different. It's the first time I heard the reward was breakfast."

"That is, I also heard it for the first time."

Seeing Erika who laughed, Ryou was also tempted to laugh.

As it became a case of the two laughing, Erika said what she noticed.

"Huh? Sakuragi-kun, did you come thinking it was breakfast?"

"No, at the same time I thought it might not be."

Erika, who heard Ryou's words, tilted her head.

".....after this aren't we going to a movie?"

"Ha?"

This time it's Ryou who raises a wild voice.

"Eh? Because Sakuragi-kun wants to go to a movie, isn't it that I'm accompanying you?"

"....., the movie I want to go see, what is it?"

Ryou who is confused and thought he heard incorrectly, asked that.

"Err, Even if you ask me..."

Erika who is also confused said so.

"That so."

Ryou folds his arms while thinking.

"..., by the way, did you come here with a schedule in mind on what will be done today?"

"? See a movie with Sakuragi-kun, at noon eat lunch, and afterwards look around the outlet mall together with Sakuragi-kun....., isn't it?"

Ryou's jaw could be seen dropping rapidly, Erika considered it a question.

What is this typical wholesome high school student date plan!? Ryou retorted in his mind. Not understanding what's going on, he asked about the person who it seemed created this situation.

“By any chance..., did that scheming glasses say so?”

“...do you possibly mean Azusa? Azusa said she heard this request from Sakuragi-kun..., is it different?”

Erika who understood that scheming glasses is Azusa, for a moment almost burst out laughing, somehow stopped herself and said so.

“Ah, I haven’t spoken with that woman since Friday at lunch, I only got a mail yesterday at midnight which said to come here.”

Erika who heard that has a thoroughly surprised and bewildered face.

“Eh!? Then..., what? But wanting to go to movie, and then wanting to go shopping, isn’t it so?”

“Well..., I’m certain I didn’t come here with that plan.”

“But.....”

When Erika heard Ryou’s reply she visibly felt down. Ryou who couldn’t endure seeing that, thought about what to do. It is a precious Sunday, the weather is also pleasant. Getting up so early in the morning just to return home and sleep , has the feeling of being a waste...

“You, the plan was to go to movie then shopping was it?”

“? Yeah, that’s right but...”

Erika who was looking downwards raises her head.

“Then, let’s go.”

“Eh?”

“Movie and shopping.”

“Eh!? ...is it fine with Sakuragi-kun?”

Joy was expressed instantly on Erika’s face, but it was erased at once when she peeps at him and hears him.

“Ah, to return home as is..., though it’s aggravating to go along with that woman’s calculations..., of course, that’s if it’s fine with you.”

“Of course it is!! That’s what I originally came for...”

Hearing that Ryou laughs.

“Then it’s settled.”



## Chapter 8 – First Date

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“Was there a movie theater inside this outlet mall?”

“Yep.”

Hearing Erika’s reply, they move towards the outlet mall that opened up recently near this station. Ryou who saw the basket in Erika’s hands said.

“That seems heavy, should I carry it?”

Erika who understood Ryou is looking at her basket declined in a hurry.

“It’s fine, it’s fine. It’s heavy.”

Ryou laughed unintentionally because of Erika’s words.

“That’s why I said I’ll take it.”

“Ah, b-but...”

“It’s fine, look. I have reasonable confidence in my physical strength, and I’m empty-handed.”

While saying so, Ryou grabbed the basket off of Erika’s hands.

“Ah..., sorry and thanks.”

Erika hangs her handbag over her shoulder while saying so.

“Aah..., this is really heavy. What’s in it?”

Ryou said so while slightly surprised that the basket was heavier than he expected.

Erika who sees that says worryingly.

“Is it alright?”

Ryou laughed again.

"If it's unreasonable for me, it should be even more unreasonable for you. It's alright, I was just surprised because it's heavier than I thought. So, what's inside?"

While saying so, Ryou easily moves the basket up and down to show its fine, Erika let out a breath of relief and said with a smile.

"Is it fine if it's a secret?"

"Secret? Well, fine..., will I know later?"

"Yes, later."

Saying so, Erika smiled while looking at Ryou who is curious.

"You, what do you want to see?"

When the two arrived at the movie theater and are checking what is showing, Ryou asked Erika.

"Me? What about Sakuragi-kun? ...more than that, today is supposed to be for thanking Sakuragi-kun, so isn't it fine for Sakuragi-kun to choose?"

"Saying it like that makes it sound like a holiday."

Smiling wryly, Ryou looks at what is showing and thinks there isn't anything he strongly wants to see.

"Yeah, you can pick."

Erika says laughingly.

"Is that so?"

"Please decide."

"Then... this one?"

Erika pointed towards an action one.

Fighting recklessly inside a train against terrorists, an American movie giving off a sense of speed.

Ryou who checked seems to be surprised and says to Erika.

"An action movie? I was thinking it would be a romantic movie."

This time Erika was surprised at what Ryou said.

“Would a romantic one have been better?”

“No, it not like that. I just thought that girls would want to see a romantic one.”

Hearing that, Erika laughs while denying so.

“That girls would choose romance, Sakuragi-kun has quite an outdated way of thinking.”

Ryou received a shock being told so.

“An outdated thought was said.”

Seeing the exaggerated Ryou, Erika laughs strongly.

“After all, isn’t it outdated?”

“Umm, is it so?”

Ryou listens with his arms folded and a strangely serious face.

“Yes, outdated.”

Erika who said so matched him with a serious face.

“Then, let me revise that.”

Ryou nods when saying so

“Revise it.”

and Erika nods as well. When the two look at one another, they laughed.

When purchasing the movie tickets, Erika was going to pay because it is a reward for Ryou. When he said he can’t have a woman treat him to a movie, after all he invited her, so he will pay, the two began to quarrel. In the end it was decided to share the expenses equally.

Sitting inside the movie theater, usually Ryou doesn't eat in the morning, but since he was thinking about breakfast he became a bit hungry and decided to get up and buy something from the stands.

"I'm going to the stalls, want anything?"

Erika thinks a little

"Then, ice tea please."

"Okay, and food?"

"I'm not hungry so it's fine."

"Then, wait a moment."

"Yees."

Towards Erika's again good mood reply, Ryou once again makes a curious face,

As expected, the stall just before the movie is crowded. Ryou who advances smoothly was able to purchase the things, after receiving the tray he returned to his seat with quick feet.

It was still bright when he enters the theater.

Returning to his seat, there was once again men whispering while looking at Erika. Ryou felt dispirited.

Ordinarily in such a situation, surely for him to return alone would be understandable, Ryou let out a sigh.

Looking in Erika's direction, she isn't showing signs of caring very much and is looking at her phone. The men in the surroundings were whispering to each other, Ryou sensed there to be feelings of great admiration overflowing.

Returning to his seat next to Erika, disappointment from the surroundings was transmitted through the air, but Ryou ignored it.

Noticing Ryou before he sat down, Erika looks up from her phone and smiles.

"Welcome back."

At the same time that Erika smiled there is an audible gasp here and there, Ryou smiled wryly.

"I'm back, here's the ice tea."

"Thanks, how much was it?"

When Erika says while receiving the ice tea, Ryou waves his hand to stop her from taking out her purse.

"It's fine."

However, Erika shakes her head.

"It's no good, how much?"

"It's really fine, and I can't remember it's cost anyway. Besides, it's troublesome putting away small change in a wallet."

Saying to that extent, Erika who is still a little troubled said.

"Then, later on when you're taking out your wallet I'll pay."

"It's okay."

"Splendidly stubborn aren't you?"

Erika says with a frown.

"Nah, don't you think it's different? Couldn't it be said that you're the stubborn one?"

"Nothing like that,"

Looking at Erika who suddenly turned her head the other way, Ryou smiled wryly.

"Here, you can eat from this if you want to."

He points to the french fries on the tray while holding a hot dog in the other hand.

Turning her head around with a bit of a sulky expression, Erika mutters thanks.



Pulling herself together, Erika looks in turn between the french fries and the hot dog in Ryou's hand then tilted her head.

"Is that all?"

"Hmm?"

While biting on the hot dog Ryou replied wandering what it was.

"Is that much enough?"

Erika who has seen Ryou eat an unbelievable amount during lunch, was thinking while looking at the single hot dog and fries which was purchased.

Ryou who noticed the meaning, muttered an "aah".

"I usually don't eat in the morning and only have coffee. Since I thought about breakfast today I was a bit hungry."

"You only have coffee in the morning?"

"Yeah."

"Isn't it bad for your body?"

"Maybe."

"So it's better if you eat?"

"That's right."

When Ryou gives noncommittal responses, he felt a little bit of a displeased aura coming from behind Erika and said.

"W-what is it?"

"Are you going to eat properly?"

"A-ah. I understand. I'll do so when possible."

"That's no good, eat properly."

"Are you my mother!?"

Ryou retorted reflexively.

"Will you eat, or won't you?"

Erika says while drawing near to Ryou.

Ryou's retort was ignored.

“Eh, ignored? Y-yes, I’ll eat. I’ll be sure to eat (when possible) in the morning.”

Because Erika’s back aura was growing stronger, Ryou made sure to reply politely.

“Really?”

“Yes (perhaps)”

Ryou answered with a sincere expression.

It seem that Ryou’s sincere expression was successful as Erika’s aura slowly disappears. Feeling relieved Ryou offered fries.

“If you like, here.”

With Erika’s feelings having changed, she say thanks for the food and picks up a fry to eat. Chatting while waiting for the movie to begin, the theater darkens, the movie advertisements begin and when they were over the movie began.

In the middle of the movie, the clichéd accident of their hands crossing while reaching for a fry (would it usually be popcorn?) didn’t occur.

However, though they aren’t mutually aware regarding their hands on the armrests, the two did not put their hands on the armrests.

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## Chapter 9 – Temperature

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“Splendid, it was interesting.”

Feeling a peculiar sense of fatigue after watching the movie, Ryou expresses his light impressions while leaving the theater.

“Oh well. What do you think about that point where they didn’t just attack?”  
“Ah, that was way too slow. I almost screamed for them to hurry up and attack.”

Erika laughs lightly because of Ryou’s impressions, laughing together while exchanging impressions they leave the theater.

(Come to think of it, it’s been a long time since I’ve gone to a movie with someone. When something I want to see comes out, I’d just go see it alone after school. Going with someone every now and then is good.)

Ryou thinks about such a thing while hearing Erika’s impressions.

“Now then, let’s eat lunch.”

The hotdog he ate before the movie stimulated his stomach and Ryou’s feelings of hunger only seemed to increase.

Erika only took a few fries, and most were eaten slowly by Ryou.

“Is there something you want to eat? Perhaps it’s here, did you see an information board?”

When Ryou asks so, Erika says with a smile.

“Lunch will be in the park.”  
“Park? Why there?”

Ryou asks while perplexed and Erika walks on ahead while smiling.

Ryou was lead out of the outlet mall opposite to the side where the station is, to what can be called a large park. The lawn spreads out, and here and there are lines of trees in the open space. Seeing this, Ryou couldn't conceal his surprise.

"Heh? I didn't know there was such a park."

"Didn't know? The weather's fine today, so doesn't it feel good to be outside?"

Why that was said can easily be understood. The sun is up, and though it's a little warm for May, a pleasant wind is blowing.

Moving to the shade of a tree would feel good, Ryou then said with a fond look on his face.

"So then, buy something and eat in three's shade."

Erika who hears Ryou's words was amazed.

"Has the reason we came here not been understood yet? Fine then, shall we go under that tree there?"

Saying so, is it fine to not buy anything? Ryou who is perplexed had his sleeve pulled.

Heading towards a tree, Erika turns her head towards Ryou and says.

"Can you pass the basket?"

"Ah..., yeah."

Ryou, who was still feeling a little perplexed, obediently passed the basket to Erika.

Erika then opens the basket, takes out a sheet, and spreads it on the ground.

"Sit there."

Ryou moves as was said and the two sit down on the beautiful sheet which was spread.

From the basket, Erika takes out a multi-tiered food box, flask, paper cups, disposable chopsticks and paper plates.

Ryou who sees that at last, truly at last understood. For him it was a really unusual to have bad judgement to that degree.

Ryou, who realizes that now, averted his face that was red from embarrassment.

Erika seeing Ryou in such a state, asks happily.

“Do you finally understand?”

“Ah. When thinking of its weight, it would be a boxed lunch.”

Ryou said in embarrassment.

“Sakuragi-kun, would you say you eat about five times as much as me? That’s why it didn’t fit in a lunch bag, and became a multi-tiered food box.”

Because Erika said so with a laugh, Ryou also was tempted to laugh.

Erika opened the food box.

The box has two levels, the lower one is tightly packed with rice balls, the upper one has hamburger, salmon slices, rolled omelette, fried chicken, potato salad. It is packed full with the standar menu for boxed lunches.

Ryou stares in wonder and surprise at the quantity of the contents. This surely might be more than five time the quantity Erika would eat.

“Amazing..., this, is all you? This morning...? Did you get up extremely early?”

Ryou thinks about the time it would take to make all these, but was simply not able to imagine it.

“Hn? Most of it was prepared yesterday, I mostly just had to make the side dishes. Only the rice balls had to be entirely mad today. But, does Sakuragi-kun think that time wasn’t necessary?”

“Do I think so? No, this is really amazing... Handmade boxed lunch..., it’s been a long time.....

Ryou is deeply moved and in a daze at the “handmade lunch box” in front of his eyes.

Erika who is slightly puzzled at Ryou’s state shift’s her attention, pours tea from the flask into the paper cups, and passes disposable chopsticks and a paper plate to Ryou.

“Then, will you eat?”

“Ah, aah...”

Erika is little bit confused at Ryou who is still in a daze, and additionally says.

“If you don’t want to eat, you don’t have to...?”

To Erika’s words, Ryou suddenly became flustered and waves his hands in denial.

“No, it’s different, different, I was only a little surprised.”

Seeing Ryou like that, Erika let out a slight breath of relief and put her hands together. Ryou seeing that also put his hands together.

“”Thanks for the food.””

“What do you want to eat? There are plum, kelp and tuna rice balls.”

“Eh, ah then, a plum rice ball and rolled omelette please.”

Erika nods to Ryou’s words, takes out the rice ball and rolled omelette and puts it on Ryou’s plate.

When it’s placed on his plate, Ryou looks at the rice ball and rolled omelette then splits the omelette with his chopsticks, and slowly brings it to his mouth.

Boxed lunch, handmade, that is to say, made this morning, the difference between the boxed lunch he is eating now and the boxed lunch from the convenience store can’t be expressed, there is a unique temperature. Something that was made in the morning, naturally, the insides cools down. But that is a small matter. Because from the start, the surroundings are also warm, they warm each other and it’s not easy do become cold. If it wasn’t put in a lunch box, the food cooling down would be a concern, but since it

was, cooling down isn't an issue. Thus, there is a peculiar temperature belonging to handmade boxed lunches.

Feeling the temperature of the omelette inside his mouth, Ryou recalls when he used to eat handmade lunches. It was a nostalgic memory. What caused the sense of nostalgia is the delicious taste of the rolled omelette. It's salty enough and the flavor is to his liking, a taste he thought he wouldn't be able to eat anymore. It looks very much like tears would come out due to the deliciousness.

No, tears have come out.

Ryou who wasn't aware of his tears, panics and wipes hastily wipes them.

Seeing Ryou like that, Erika is staring in complete astonishment and quickly asks.

"Sa-Sakuragi-kun!? Was eating it unpleasant to the point of crying!?"

It seems Erika is also at a loss. Seeing the person she made food for shed tears in front of her eyes.

Ryou, who is also at a loss, denies every meaning of Erika's words.

"C-cry!? It's not unpleasant at all!! Rather is extremely delicious, It's just been a while..."

As he was going to continue saying more, Ryou's emotions got worked up and tears almost appeared again. Somehow saying, excuse me for a moment, putting on his shoes, he got off the sheet and went behind a tree where Erika couldn't see.

Hidden behind the tree, Ryou wipes the fresh tears which had started to stream. The arm used to wipe is held against both eyes while leaning against the tree taking deep breaths.

While taking deep breaths he noticed Erika was in front of him before he was aware. Not noticing when someone drew near, how long as it been? While Ryou with his arm against his eyes laughs at himself, Erika asked.

"Are you alright? Sakuragi-kun."

Trying to laughingly reply to Erika's question, when he started opening his mouth, feeling it was a little risky he held up his palm, conveying the meaning of wait a moment, he again hid so Erika couldn't see.

Then, Erika grabbed Ryou's arm and drew him closer to herself.

Ryou's confusion increased when grabbed. His face didn't make his usual reflexive expression and stretched out to Erika. Ryou became aware he was being hugged closely by Erika.

Of course, there is a height difference and Ryou's form is bending with his face buried in Erika's neck.

When Ryou realizes what is currently happening, he slowly let out his voice.

"Uh.....m, well?"

"Is it not because my lunch was bad?"

Hearing those words, when Ryou was going to stand up in a hurry and deny it, Erika unexpectedly strongly held onto Ryou, and it wasn't easy to stand straight. Giving up on standing up, with his posture as is, clear mutters to Erika that it's not that.

Erika lets out a laugh hearing that and says.

"That's good... I don't understand why you cried, but if you want to, then isn't it fine?"

"Aah..., no, I was surprised but I'm completely fine now. ...rather, I didn't cry."

Erika again lets out a laugh.

"Is that so?"

"Yeah, there was no crying."

Ryou who is expressing denial in a tone different to usual, makes Erika laugh again.

"Oh? Then I guess that's how it is."



Saying so teasingly, when she was going to separate her hands from around Ryou, in that moment Ryou hugged her.

Erika says in a perplexed voice.

“? Sakuragi-kun...?”

“Sorry, stay like this for a bit.”

“.....”

Ryou takes Erika’s silence as affirmation, strength unconsciously enter into the arms hugging Erika. Although it was a little while, he hugged tightly.

“N...”

Erika makes that sound and returns the hug.

The temperature from Erika’s body is transmitted to Ryou, that feeling, the ease it brought him was unbelievable. He thanked Erika for not prying too deeply into why he cried.

After that, the two continued to hug for several seconds, Ryou slowly decreases the power in his hug and parts from Erika.

Ryou, without matching eyes with Erika, says while looking away.

“Eh..., that, excuse me. And thanks.”

Erika smiles towards Ryou.

“It’s my pleasure.”

Then, Ryou bring his face close to Erika

“...I didn’t cry right?”

and, Ryou says so seriously once again emphasizing it is like that.

A \*pfft\* spouts out from Erika’s mouth, her shoulders start to vibrate, when it becomes unable to restrain anymore, she laughed loudly while holding her stomach.

Seeing her laugh like this for the first time, he pouts,

“Why laugh to that extent...?”

“Be-because... ahahahaha.”

Ryou seeing Erika like that, thinking he made a considerably foolish display, he laughed together with Erika.

After the two had laughed to their heart's content, they returned to the sheet and resumed their meal.

Of course Ryou no longer cried, and many times says it's delicious, while Erika is astonished looking at the great speed the contents of the food box were being consumed.

Erika seeing Ryou's manner of eating, let out a breath of relief that her cooking really wasn't unpleasant.

When all the contents were exhausted, Ryou put his hands together, and bowed while in a good mood.

“Thanks for the meal.”

“You're welcome.”

Erika also smiles while bowing.

“Well, it really was delicious. The person who has you as a bride will be happy.”

Ryou said while satisfied.

Erika who hears that blushes a little.

“I-is that so? Thank you.”

“Ah, I think it's seriously enviable.”

“Th-then, if I make it again, would you eat it?”

Though Ryou was puzzled for an instant, he smiles and nods.

“If you make it, I'll eat it anytime.”

“Really?”

When asking so, Erika smiles while approaching Ryou without realizing it.

Ryou flinches a bit from Erika and nods.

“A-ah. It was delicious so I’d eat it again.”

“Then, I’ll make it again.”

Erika, who heard Ryou’s words, again laughs and smiles with a cheerful face.

If someone’s cooking is praised, of course they would be happy, Ryou stupidly misunderstands.



## Chapter 10 – Pillow

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With a full stomach and a lack of sleep, Ryou lets out a large yawn. Seeing Ryou like that, Erika asks.

“Are you tired?”

“Nn? A little..., I went to bed late yesterday.”

“That so? ...it’s cool here and the wind is pleasant, that’ll make you even sleepier.”

“Indeed.”

Ryou lies down on the sheet while saying so. The sheet feels cool and his eyes narrowed.

Erika who saw Ryou lie down next to her smiled.

“Taking a nap?”

“Nah, that would be..., are you also sleepy?”

Opposed to sleeping and keeping a girl waiting, his question erupted, thinking whether Erika will also say she’ll lie down.

Erika denies while smiling.

“I have some resistance to lying down here... Isn’t it fine? I’ll wait here.”

“It’s alright. Weren’t we to go around the outlet mall after this?”

Erika looked puzzled.

“Sakuragi-kun, is there something you want to buy?”

“Not really.”

“Then, isn’t it fine.”

“But, didn’t you want to look around?”

To Ryou’s question, Erika laughingly says.

“Though I want to look, when I’m next to a person with drowsy eyes, I wouldn’t be at ease seeing that.”

Unable to oppose Erika’s reply, Ryou just smiles.

"I can't object when you say it like that. Then, I'll lie down for a bit. Will you wake me if I oversleep?"

Erika acknowledges Ryou's request with a smile.

"Yep, okay."

Hearing Erika's reply, Ryou then makes a full-on sleep posture on top of the sheet. Since it's on top of the hard ground and there isn't a pillow, Ryou can't quite settle down. First placing his arms under his head while turning over, he couldn't find the best posture. After changing positions several times, Erika called out.

"Um, well..., could you use this?"

Opening his eyes and facing where the voice came from, Erika with a slightly red face is striking her lap.

Not understanding Erika's intention, Ryou silently looks puzzled.

"Um, ...this"

While saying so with her face further reddening, Erika strikes her lap.

Seeing that, Ryou finally understood the meaning of what Erika said. Lap pillow.

Ryou waved his hand in a panic.

"N-no, it's alright!"

Erika face looks like her feelings were hurt.

"After all, am I unpleasant?"

When that's said, Ryou once again waves his hand in a panic.

"No, it's not that! That is, you're cute..."

To receive a lap pillow from a cute girl, he can by no means do something so awe-inspiring, Ryou who was going to say so, hesitates for some reason and

was at a loss for words. When asking himself why, he understood the reason. He feels very much distant, but when they hugged earlier, the ease he felt was like a lie.

Looking curiously at Ryou who is at a loss, Erika asks in a voice packed with some anticipation.

“Then, it’s not unpleasant?”

Startled from Erika’s words, Ryou nods quickly.

“Of course! It’s a really attractive invitation...”

All the same, to have a lap pillow in the public like this..., about to say so, Erika interrupts Ryou’s words

“Then, isn’t it fine.”

and while saying so, she places her palm on her lap.

Ryou’s eyes turn to dots and hesitated.

“No, well...”

Wouldn’t it be a shame to not use the lap pillow before his eyes, when thinking so, Erika who became irritated said in a strong tone.

“Don’t you want to sleep!? Come here now, and sleep!”

Ryou, while thinking she once again became like a mother, due to the atmosphere where he couldn’t go against Erika answered with a “Yes” reflexively.

Sluggishly, Ryou comes near to Erika, “My regards” is muttered. Erika reddens “By all means”, hearing Erika say so he places his head on top of her lap.

My regards, is it strange to say so, while thinking so he looks upwards. Not small, before his eyes were two rather large mountains, hastily looking away, when turning to the side, lots of people walking in the park came into view and a splendid number are looking this way.

Like this, Ryou again with haste, turns to the other opposite direction.

This way, only Erika's clothes can be seen, in a sense facing towards Erika like this is embarrassing, but judging this to be more preferable to the other options, Ryou decided to settle on this position.

With his position fixed, this time he became anxious about the feeling under his head.

Slightly elevated, it's soft, warm and comfortable, it's indescribable. Isn't this high quality pillow unmatched? Ryou thinks. Though he hasn't used the likes of those high quality pillows.

Now that it's come to this he decided to enjoy this sensation, sleeping with this comfortable feeling, while troubled how to do so, Ryou fell asleep before he was aware.

When Ryou put his head on her lap, his changing directions made her feel shy. Before long he stopped moving and fell asleep.

Looking at his face, due to his excessively innocent sleeping face, she almost started laughing at him sleeping so comfortably. Raising her hand to cover her mouth she started shaking.

Observing his face, she thinks back to the tears from just now.

For a moment he looked very sad and his eyes seemed to be lonely.

The tears were wiped immediately, his mouth trembled in the middle of trying to deceive, almost tearing up again he hid behind a tree.

It resembled a feeling of unease, feelings that can't be ignored, while he was suppressing his cry she went before him.

He made a gesture with his hand to wait, he tried to hide himself again at once.

At that moment, she surprised herself and impulsively hugged him closely.

As would be expected he was also surprised, but the urge to cry calmed down.

Though it was her own act, she was at her wits end, thinking it would be better to not enquire further, although understanding already, she inquired about the boxed lunch.

Because it was then denied with a clear tone she laughed amusingly.

The crying seemed to have settled, when suggesting that if he still wants to cry he can do it in front of her, his tone became strange and when he tried to deny what happened, she laughed again.

While thinking its fine already, though reluctant to pass, when going to separate her hands from him, this time she was hugged closely and was in his arms.

Though she called out in surprise, she calmed down, and a slightly lonely voice entered her ears, as a result without knowing why she became sad, unable to say anything she hugged him strongly.

When strongly hugged by his arms, probably because of the strength transmitted to her body, in addition to something else, delight overflowed with in her and became feelings of satisfaction.

When parting, he seemed to be greatly embarrassed but conveyed his thanks.

Afterwards, he again tried to deceive that he didn't cry, unable to endure it, a large laugh escaped her mouth.

It's been while since she laughed to that extent.

Being enticed, he joined in and the two laughed together.

Erika recalls she laughed then for some time, reflecting on that, she laughs with her shoulders without letting her voice come out.

Nonetheless, thinking about it, she understands that when with him she feels calm, that it would be effective even when he sleeps was unexpected by Erika.

It's a calm day, but her heart has throbbed many times.



Though the current lap pillow is a bold action, half of her feelings were composed, while the other half is shyness as a result of the lap pillow making her heart throb.

But Erika is actually strangely comfortable, looking towards Ryou with her posture as is, invited by Ryou's sleeping she closes her eyes.

When opening his eyes, something is there.

Thinking what it is while he is dazed, when his eyes become focused, that something in front of his eyes is clearly an angel he thought.

Now, when did I enter heaven, no, rather than thinking about going ahead to heaven, there's some recollection of the angel's face, staring at her, she isn't an angel but an extremely cute girl with her eyes closed. Recognizing her after a while, he finally grasped the current situation.

Energetically, almost getting up, he forcibly stopped himself.

Raising his body like this would without a doubt cause them to butt heads.

Ryou, first of all wants to confirm the situation, digging into his memory, he immediately recalled.

He received a lap pillow and fell asleep before he was aware. The sleepiness has beautifully been blown away. Judging how long he slept, he thinks it to probably be about one hour.

And then there's the unbelievably cute sleeping face before his eyes. While he was sleeping it seems it became the case where they slept at the same time. Ryou thinks of an answer which couldn't be mistaken, takes a deep breath and calms himself down.

Good, I'm calm, Ryou who thought so slowly lifted himself off the lap.

After all, it's slightly high for a pillow so there's a pain in his neck, but it wasn't to the extent of being bad.

Raising himself, a cracking sound came from his bones, there was the feelings of wanting to relax, from that, he might as well enjoy the sensation

on the back of his head after all, his instincts and reason made a unanimous decision.

Yeah, nodding inside his mind, he raises his eyes, and carefully looks at the face there.

There are slight breathing sounds coming from her sleeping face.

The cheeks seem soft, captivated by the lips which seem tender, unable to look away he gulped with his throat.

Calm, persuading himself to look away from the reason for this calm, he is startled when realizes his right hand is approaching her cheek.

Not forcibly stopping his hand, he reached her cheek. Ryou is impressed by the feeling coming from his right hand.

Then, seemingly as a result of that, her body stirred with a twitch and her eyes slowly started to open. Ryou quickly drops his hand.

When Erika opens her eyes, they match with Ryou's eyes.

When their eyes match Ryou lightly raises his hand, "Good morning" is said.

Erika's eyes chase the movements of Ryou's hand, matching eyes with Ryou again after that, Erika;s eyes open wide, kyaa, jumps up while screaming.

Ryou's head was on top of Erika's lap. When that lap springs up Ryou's neck makes a clear loud \*crack\* sound.

Ryou, who almost faints from the pain in his neck, crouches down. Erika who grasped the situation, taken aback, raises her voice.

"S-sorry! Are you alright!? ...\*shriek\*"

Raising her voice, Erika is startled when Ryou approaches her with his body's balance broken, falling onto the sheet he uses both hands to support his body.

While enduring the pain, Ryou asks Erika astonishment.

“Are you alright? You. What happened suddenly?”

“Y-yes”

While saying so, she slowly touches her leg.

“It’s become a bit numb.”

She utters a little embarrassed.

Ah, Ryou consents and laughs.

“Is it any wonder, for someone’s head to be placed there in the exact same position for an hour.”

“Yeah..., that’s right, are you okay?”

Erika recalls in the middle of talking and questions Ryou.

“Nn? Ah...”

While saying, Ryou stretches his head to the left and right making cracking sounds, slowly moving his neck for confirmation he replies,

“Its fine now, it was painful for a moment and moderately stiff.”

“Stiff?”

Erika asks curiously, Ryou replies while waving his hand.

“Eh, Ah, as was said.”

“? ...really? ...is your sleepiness gone?”

After making a face as if wondering, Ryou laughingly replies to Erika’s enquiry.

“Ah, I’m feeling refreshed.”

“Really, that’s good.”

Erika smiles gently towards Ryou while saying so.

Ryou who was smiled at, for an instant felt his heart thump in his chest, panicking he puts his hand on his chest.

Erika seeing that was puzzled.

“What’s the matter?”

Being called out to, Ryou was surprised at his own disturbance and unintentionally let out in a loud voice.

“It’s nothing!”

Erika is a little surprised at the volume of Ryou’s voice, looking a little doubtful, she collects her thoughts at once, looks around the area and said.

“Should we clean up soon and go?”

This go, is likely shopping. Ryou nodded to that.

“Okay then..., before that, do you want tea? I would like something cold to drink.”

Even in the shade of the tree with the wind blowing, the fine daytime weather of May is hot and Ryou had perspired while sleeping.

“Yeah, my throat has become dry while sleeping.”

Erika nodded in agreement.

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## Chapter 11 – Unplanned

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Going back the same way they came with the basket in hand, they entered a coffee shop inside the outlet mall.

Sitting on the seat, Ryou ordered ice coffee and Erika, ice milk tea.

Feeling the comfortable coolness of the store's air-con, Ryou leans against the sofa-type seat and breaths lightly as the heat leaves his body.

Seeing that appearance Erika smiles.

“Worn out?”

“Nah, I just think its cool in here. And you, not tired?”

“I’m not. But it seems that I was also lacking sleep, but I feel refreshed after that little nap.”

Erika said shyly.

Ryou agrees with Erika’s words.

“Yeah, making such a boxed lunch might cause a lack of sleep. But it really was delicious, so thanks for the meal.”

Ryou bows his head while saying so.

“Its fine already, you’re welcome.”

Erika smiles bashfully and waves her hands.

When Ryou sits up straight and clears his throat with a cough about to say something, the drinks they ordered arrived.

Receiving the drinks, they both try theirs.

Drinking a mouthful, Ryou scowls due to forgetting the syrup he always puts in his ice coffee, he then put in syrup and milk as well.

Erika watches Ryou with interest as he stirs his ice coffee.

“You always use syrup?”

“Only with ice coffee. And only milk, no sugar with hot coffee.

“You don’t have sugar in your coffee?”

“Ah, I don’t mind the bitter taste of coffee, but with ice coffee something about it bothers me.”

Erika’s face shows a complexion of slight comprehension.

“I understand, a little.”

“Understanding it’s good.”

Ryou says so while nodding with a serious face and Erika laughs.

“Interesting, aren’t you.”

“Nah, I’m normal.”

“Nope, interesting. I don’t think I’ve laughed like today in a long time. But laughter can be good. Like that time with the boxed lunch.”

Ryou who heard that suddenly began to fidget restlessly and looked away.

“What’s wrong?”

Erika asked Ryou whose behavior has become strange, and Ryou says in a hesitant voice.

“Well, during lunch..., I just lost my composure for a bit.”

Erika doesn’t pry further.

“Yeah.”

“So you won’t tell others?”

Erika looks blankly then enquires teasingly.

“What for?”

With a seemingly embarrassed face, Ryou says.

“Uhm, well it’s that, a samurai’s mercy.”

Almost bursting out laughing from Ryou's words, Erika endures it and says.

"I'm, a woman. Not a samurai.

"Ah, then it's a woman's mercy."

This time the laughter couldn't be endured.

"What's with a woman's mercy? Though I know what you mean."

"Just remain silent about it for now."

"What is that?"

Erika laughs more and more.

"Hey, I'll get you something from this place."

While saying so, he flutters the menu.

Erika seeing that impishly says.

"So it's a treat."

"As you see."

Ryou joins both hands together in prayer towards Erika.

Looking pleasantly at Ryou, Erika says.

"Then, is ordering cake fine?"

Ryou nods promptly.

"As you please. I might as well also eat."

Erika's face became astonished.

"Even though you ate so much at lunch?"

"Don't sweet things go to a different stomach?"

"Eh, it's certainly said so but..."

Erika's face shows that she finds it hard to swallow.

“Besides, I feel like half has already been digested.”

“Already!? Half!?”

“Ah, haven’t two hours already passed since eating?”

“Eh..., half that amount in two hours...”

“Well, don’t mind the minor details. ...excuse me.”

Minor details is it, Erika ponders while Ryou called out to an employee and ordered a Chocolate cake for himself and cheese cake for Erika.

When Ryou finishes paying, Erika bows and says thanks.

Towards that, Ryou says while smiling.

“It’s cheap compared to that lunch.”

Being able to infer his real intention, Erika was pleased.

After that the two look around the shops in the outlet mall, and noticed it had already become evening.

“It’s already quite late.”

Ryou says while looking at his watch.

“We were together since 9AM, the time’s gone by so quickly.”

Erika says turning her eyes to the sky.

“You, what about dinner? Eating at home?”

“Yes, I had better go back soon.”

Though Ryou felt some loneliness from Erika’s words, he doesn’t show it when he says.

“Then let’s return. Which direction? Up? Down? Is it around here?”

“Three stations from school.”

“It’s the same direction then. Let’s go.”

The two walk side-by-side.



Along the road to the station the two went without words. Different from the previous time they returned home together, it is a silence with an easy atmosphere flowing.

For 30 minutes the silence continued as Erika goes down to the station and about to enter the train.

A little bit away from the next station, Erika found the timing to open her mouth.

“I’m getting off at the next station.”

“Ah..., should I escort you home?”

Ryou’s home is two stations away from the upcoming one, he has a commutation ticket so getting off on the way isn’t a problem.

Not just that, a big reason may be from them separating.

Hearing such a thing, Erika shook her head in refusal.

“Its fine, it’s the station I always use. Thanks.”

Saying so, she smiles to Ryou.

Receiving that, Ryou inadvertently smiled back.

Then, the trains comes to a stop, Erika goes out the door, turns around and says while smiling.

“Today was fun. See you tomorrow.”

“Ah, see you...”

After Ryou says so the door closes, and Erika waves behind the glass.

As Ryou is returning the wave, the train starts to move. Erika waves for as long as Ryou can be seen.

Lowering his hand which waving, Ryou lets out large breath.

(It's dangerous, to be falling in love. No, perhaps I already am in love... It may be the first time but I know what this is. I thought she was cute up to now, so it's simple isn't it? Nevertheless it's only been a few days...)

It's that scheming glasses fault, Ryou muttered.

Thinking about the future from now on, Ryou becomes dejected.

Coming to like someone from the same school, that wasn't a part of his high school plan.

His deciding not to be attracted to anyone was because of a girl from last year.

Though Ryou thinks nothing bad was done to the girl, she still became disgusted with him.

She was only thought of as a friend, but it became such feelings.

Then how would it be if he came to be seen that same way from the first girl he likes.

Thinking about it, he became frightened. Only from Erika, he doesn't want to be seen that way.

Being unable to see Erika's smile, though it's unpleasant not to see it, he doesn't want to be viewed through those eyes from Erika. That alone he wants to avoid.

Thinking on the other hand, in Erika's case she's likely not to become like that, Ryou realizing that's just his own hope, erases that thought.

Then, what to do to avoid the worst...

"Meeting and returning home together, I should avoid it as much as possible..."

Ryou instructs himself, muttering in a voice nobody heard.

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## Chapter 12 – The Drooping Men

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20 minutes before morning homeroom starts, Azusa enters the classroom the same time as always when she notices something is unusual.

Looking at the surroundings, the girls are whispering to each other, that's nothing new, but they seem a little more enthusiastic than normal.

The boys have a dazed facial expression. This is also as usual, though their faces are more red than usual.

There's no common point to what the boys and girls are doing, but there is a common point where they're glancing.

The boys and girls are looking in the same direction.

Azusa doesn't need to follow their eyes to know what they're looking at.

At the spot where everyone is looking, talking happily to Saki whose seat is in front of hers, is the figure of her close friend.

Though this is also as always, it's different this time.

For now it's best to observe, she thinks so understanding her close friend is in a very good mood.

Furthermore, her hairstyle is different. It's in a side ponytail.

Resting her chin on both hands she has a constant smile on her face and her feet are swaying from the knee.

She is talking to Saki while in such cheerful mood.

Azusa quickly takes out her phone and takes ten photos of her cute close friend, after taking a minute long video she goes towards her close friend.

Erika finally notices Azusa when she is nearby, and her happy smiling face grew more potent.

“Good morning, Azusa.”

Azusa immediately hugs her excessively cute close friend, enduring her impulse to rub their cheeks together she returns the greeting with a smile.

“Good morning, Erika, Saki.”

“Good morning.”

Saki returned the greeting in a small voice.

“You seem to be in a good mood, was it fun yesterday?”

While saying so, Azusa sat down on the chair next to Erika that isn't hers.

“It was enjoyable. Ah! ...Azusa, didn't you tell him anything about yesterday!?”

When Azusa asked, Erika answered in a cheerful voice, realizing something halfway she asked Azusa so in an accusing manner.

Pretending not to notice, Azusa then replied.

“Is that how it was...? But it was fun wasn't it?”

Erika is at a loss for words when asked so.

“Th-that, it was but...”

“It's all good then isn't it?”

“But knowing nothing made us confused!”

Erika says so in a furthermore accusing manner, Azusa with a serious face is nodding many times and urges her to speak more.

Erika looks at Azusa with reproachful eyes and talks about the misunderstanding that Ryou's reward was breakfast, Azusa and Saki who heard that start laughing.

“Ahaha, going with such a misunderstanding, he's amusing.”

Saki's shoulders are shaking and her hand is in front of her mouth.

"Suddenly hearing such a misunderstanding was really confusing."

"Well, seems so. However you went out after that didn't you?"

Azusa holds down her laughter to ask Erika that, Erika became energetic like a flower which has bloomed and replies.

"That's right! Thinking about it I did go after all, I completely went! Wonderful, it was enjoyable!!"

Azusa and Saki look at Erika with gentle eyes as she says so in ecstasy.

Then unexpectedly near the three, Azusa notices the figure of someone approaching and turns around. Standing there is Okamoto, a boy from the same class with a red face and a restless gaze. Looking at him with inquisitive eyes Azusa asked.

"Okamoto-kun, what's wrong?"

Okamoto who was asked so had a startled face, looking at Azusa, he then matched eyes with Erika. With eyes matched Erika looks at Okamoto with a curious face. Matching eyes with Erika, Okamoto's face further reddens and he looks down. However, he then vigorously raises his face as if he has made up his mind, while bowing deeply he says with great energy.

"Please! Fujimoto-san, please go out with me!! I like you! Today you're even more lovely than usual!! Please!!"

The three beautiful girls, no, all the people in the classroom at that time, absentmindedly dropped their jaws, Okamoto who made a grand confession in the classroom in the morning was seen.

Before the three girls could say anything, two boys from the class other than Okamoto suddenly run over to him seemingly in hurry while voicing complaints.

"That's unfair, Okamoto!"

"Yeah, acting ahead like that isn't allowed!"

The ones who ran over to Okamoto while complaining are boys from the same class, Kudou and Yoshida. It's well-known that these three are close even within the class. Being blamed by the two, Okamoto lowers his head and says to them.

"Sorry!! However! Today's Fujimoto-san...is so cute! Too cute!! Therefore I couldn't endure..."

It was exclaimed in grief.

"Da..., It's certainly is...!"

"Ah, the hairstyle different than usual is attractive, more than that it's the shining aura...!"

Kudou and Yoshida says so with a sorrowful expression while firmly grasping their fists, the two match eyes, nod mutually and simultaneously turn their heads towards Erika with a resolved expression.

Although Erika's expression became further dumbfounded when they turned to her, the two ignore it and bow in the same way as Okamoto who they're next and simultaneously say.

""Please, go out with me!!""

It's unsure if it's by chance that it was identical words at the identical time, coming to her senses before anyone else in front of that situation, as expected was Azusa.

"..Ha! ...hey Erika!"

She says so while poking Erika. Erika receiving that from Azusa suddenly stands up in a panic.

Because of her standing up in a hurry, the chair makes a sharp sound that resounds through the classroom, due to that sound several people in the classroom came to their senses but no-one spoke.

Meanwhile, Erika says with a trouble face.

"Err..., um..., I'm sorry!!"

Erika bowed while saying so.

The three men who heard Erika's words raise the head with a sorrowful expression, and Okamoto said.

"...It-it's impossible after all. ...Is, is there someone you like?"

When asked so Erika raises her head which was lowered, while her face reddens slightly she says hesitantly.

"Th-that's..."

Seeing Erika like that the three's expressions of sorrow deepens, and Azusa raises her voice.

"There is, someone who Erika likes."

Erika's face reddens further due to Azusa's remark and she turns around in a panic while protesting.

"Hey, Azusa!"

"What? Did I say something wrong?"

"It's not that! I never said a single word like that!!"

Without hiding her amazed eyes, Azusa says to Erika while resting her chin on her hand.

"Erika, my eyes are not just ornaments. Did you only notice yesterday? If so then you're slower than I thought~"

"Ugh..."

Azusa's words about Erika were on the mark, putting Erika at a loss for words with a bright red face. Azusa looks at such an Erika with interest.

While the two were having such an exchange, the existences of the three boys were forgotten and they have a look of resignation, when Kudou says.

"Th-then Fujimoto-san has someone she likes, which guy is the criminal...?"

Recalling the existences of the three, Erika and Azusa turn around quickly, and Erika with a troubled face says distinctly.

“Sorry, I can’t say.”

When Erika answers so, Kudou still hanging on says.

“Th-then, same, is it a boy from this class!?”

With Kudou’s remark, the facial expressions of the boys in class became mixed with feeling of hope and anxiety.

“Uh..., a different one. I can’t say any further, sorry.”

Saying so while bowing, the boys in the class had faces as if the world had ended, the Okamoto, Kudou and Yoshida threesome had faces like their souls have left their bodies, muttering sorry for this morning, the three turn around while placing their arm around each other’s shoulders, let’s get drunk today, they murmur while going back to their seats.

Before the three sit on their seats, this time the girls in class excitedly gather around Erika.

“Erika-chan, is there finally someone you like!?”

“When!? Yesterday!?”

“Is he from this school!?”

“Same school year? Or older!?”

“No no, he could be younger.”

“Is it like that!? Hmm, Erika-chan!?”

“Are you going out!?”

Receiving a barrage of questions all at once from the surroundings, Erika glares at Azusa while thinking how to answer these questions, or isn’t it fine to not answer any of them. While pondering so the chime rings and the homeroom teacher enters immediately. The girls reluctantly part from Erika and sat on their seats.

Though Erika was relieved, when thinking that this might continue for the rest of today, she became worried about what to do.

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## Chapter 13 – The Weeping Man

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During the class before lunchtime, Ryou's heart throbs when he receives a message from Erika, suppressing it with self-control he then checks it, let's have lunch together, it's an invitation.

Ryou wonders why he is still being invited, with such sad thoughts he replies with a refusal.

Ryou doesn't want to meet up until his feelings have cooled down a bit, from the middle of last week all lunchtimes and while returning home (It was actually only from Thursday, so only two days), have been together with those beautiful girls, and not with the boys from class. Because there were numerous rumors last week, in order to make sure they're completely forgotten, though he's not happy about it, he decided it's best to go to the cafeteria together with the boys from class. He's also gotten moderately tired of buying bread.

After class was finished and it became lunchtime, Shouji looked back from the seat in front and called out to Ryou.

"Ryou, is it the cafeteria today?"

"Ah, then let's go together."

"Ah, they also seem to be going so let's all go."

While Shouji nods, he says so looking at the group Ryou normally talks with in class.

"May as well."

Ryou nodded back in return.

In addition to Ryou and Shouji, is the group Ryou is normally together with (certified B by Ryou). With a wide physique and a wide heart is the cheerful Kawashima Satoru, wearing black glasses and a serious face is the unique Natsuyama Takumi, and there's the tall in stature but frivolous Higashi Shinosuke, such a lineup make their way to the cafeteria. They each receive their respective orders and sit at a vacant six seat table.

As they're sitting, Shouji says in an amazed voice to Ryou and Kawashima.

"An amazing amount as usual, you two."

On Ryou's tray is three large portions of food from the menu. Kawashima's tray is the same, no, the quantity is slightly more than Ryou's (cafeteria aunt's service).

"Isn't this much normal? Heh Ryou?"

"Indeed. How can so little be sufficient, it's you guys' stomach's that are strange."

When Kawashima seeks agreement from Ryou, Ryou promptly agrees.

"So the talk has come to this. Satoru I can understand because of his chubby figure. But the most mysterious one is Ryou and your stomach. You don't exercise yet your physique is the same as mine and you eat more than three times as much as me."

Natsuyama Takumi retorts to Ryou's statement, Ryou shrugs his shoulders while answering.

"I don't know, I've always had this amount."

"Rather than that, there's something I want to hear Ryou."

Higashi Shinosuke addresses Ryou with an unusually serious face.

Ryou looks towards his friend's serious face, seeing they all look serious and asks back in a humble manner.

"What is it?"

Higashi nods in return then opens his mouth.

"Is Fujimoto-san not coming anymore?"

"Fujimoto-san...? A-ah, her."

For Ryou, Erika is recognized as 'Erika', and her full name 'Fujimoto Erika' was forgotten. If the family name is heard he wouldn't immediately connect that Erika=Fujimoto. And when he is with Erika, Azusa and Saki are with

them, though he hasn't heard what Saki calls her, Azusa always calls her 'Erika'.

The others all have a uniform facial expression of bewilderment seen Ryou who forgot for a moment, don't you remember it? Don't joke around, pretending not to know, Ryou was unanimously abused.

"Hey, calm down. Don't you know I have trouble remembering names not stored on my phone?"

"Even so, it's abnormal not to recognize the name of this school's super idol at once."

"That's right, but let's move this along."

Thanks to Ryou's excuse, Satoru shows some consent when he speaks, Takumi also shows approval when he speaks while correcting his glasses.

Then, Higashi once again calls out to Ryou with a serious face.

"Ryou"

"Yep"

"I ask you! I also want to speak with Fujimoto-san!! If that's impossible then let me see her from nearby!!"

Saying so, Higashi places both hands and his head on the table bowing to Ryou, it's the sitting down version of prostrating yourself.

"M-me to, me too"

Kawashima promptly tries to take advantage.

"I want to take a photo from close by."

Natsuyama says so while his glasses shine.

Ryou is taken aback looking at the unusual faces of this lineup.

"Y-you guys. Aren't you misunderstanding something?"

"Even a misunderstanding is okay, I saw a miracle last Wednesday. That super idol spoke to our friend, intimately shaking your shoulder to wake you up, so I ask you please. I'm saying this isn't a miracle."

Higashi raised his head and spoke with delirious enthusiasm.

Seeing the excessive appearance of Higashi, Ryou quickly denies it.

“That’s why I said so! I helped when she fell, and I received thanks!! Our relations are only that, so we didn’t even exchange phone numbers! We didn’t become friends either, I don’t have the power to have her talk with you!!”

Ryou told a white lie. Phone numbers were exchanged. Although there are slightly complicated feeling you could say she’s a friend, please talk with my friends, he doesn’t think that’s something he can say with their relations.

“That’s, UNFAIR!!”

Higashi screams and cries. Tears were actually streaming down.

“W-what the hell.”

Ryou somewhat pulls back due to Higashi’s appearance.

“Akira, didn’t you speak with Fujimoto-san, I was near and saw it!”

“Ha!?”

“Me!?”

Ryou made a facial expression of unknown meaning, Shouji Akira points at himself and let out a voice of surprise.

“That right! You we’re called out to by Fujimoto-san, did you not see Fujimoto-san’s begging pose in front of your eyes!”

Higashi condemns Shouji while in grief.

“Oi, Higashi. What’s with that begging pose. Don’t say things that can cause misunderstandings in a loud voice.”

Ryou sees the surrounding painful glances and tries to stop his friend.

“In my case, it was really just by chance. I was only in the front seat. There’s no reason to criticize me.”

Shouji cries so to defend himself from the crime he's accused of.

"I'M JEALOUS!!!!"

That's Higashi shouting so from his very soul.

All those present, became speechless.

The entire cafeteria is quite for a moment and all attention is directed towards Ryou's table. The chief offender Higashi is cowering on the table and crying bitterly.

It's a scene where you would hesitate to speak, in a sense, Ryou who could be called the perpetrator of this situation call outs gently.

"Listen Higashi. ,,me letting you come close to that person, I don't have that kind of power to let you talk. Look at my appearance, won't you understand if you just look at it?"

"....."

"Besides, if you want to talk so much shouldn't you just try talking to her? Try talking a little, if you're addressing that person then I think she'll respond properly."

When they heard those words, Kawashima, Natsuyama and Shouji, oh shit, they shake their heads as if to say so.

Ryou looking at those three wonders where he said something incorrect as an impatient expression floats on his face. Higashi abruptly stands up and says with anger on his face.

"THAT, REQUIRES, COURAGE!!!"

Word by word he said so in loud voice.

It seems Ryou is thought to be in the wrong with what he said and had the reverse effect.

"That was Ryou's bad now."

"Ryou's to blame."

"Ah, it's Ryou's fault."

Shouji, Kawashima and Natsuyama say so to Ryou, though he doesn't grasp the situation, Ryou reluctantly apologizes to Higashi.

"Well, sorry."

"Che, this guy was merely lucky."

Higashi curses the apologizing Ryou and sat down with a thud. As could be expected Ryou was irritated. The other three peel their faces away from Higashi's frivolous attitude.

"Say, Ryou, is it really not possible?"

In order to change the mood Kawashima asks Ryou with a bit of expectation mixed in.

"Ah, I can't. And there are no more opportunities to talk as well."

Ryou resolutely denies it.

"It might be so..."

Natsuyama calmly shakes his head.

"Then, if there's ever a chance, I beg you!"

Higashi with his from a short while ago gone, says so to Ryou without learning his lesson.

Ryou then spoke with a weary face.

"That's if there is even an opportunity to talk! Do think I'll have the relations where I can just suddenly lead you all together to speak with her."

"That's right..."

"Well, certainly..."

To that, Kawashima and Natsuyama couldn't help but agree.

However, the idiot still hasn't given up, Higashi says with vigor.

"So then, supposing it does, when you have such a relationship I'll ask!!"

Ryou is amazed at Higashi's persistence.

"If it does then..."

By some chance, if their relationship becomes like that, but, isn't thinking that far being conceited? Ryou thought so, as well as in such a state of affairs he would definitely stand out, it has to be avoided.

"Fine then, I leave it to you!!"

Still furthermore persistent, Ryou raises both hands as if he has given up as Higashi is drawing closer waiting for confirmation.

"I get it!"

"You better not lie, or it's an end to the friendship of all those here! It's a promise!!"

"Ending our friendship..., are you in elementary school!?"

Ryou promptly lets out a retort.

While sighing, Natsuyama says to Ryou.

"Isn't it fine already, it's just promise like that, Ryou."

Sighing as well, Ryou says.

"Okay then, it's a promise!"

Satisfied with Ryou's words, Higashi began to eat his meal with a smile.

Ryou seeing that complained so that only Shouji next to him could hear.

"He'll just have to wait for such a miracle, wouldn't it be quicker to just say something himself?"

Shouji smiles, and talks in the same way that only Ryou can hear.

"There is that. But, I don't think it's that much of a miracle."

Ryou is momentarily surprised and asked back immediately.

“What do you mean?”

“Exactly what I said. Besides, that guy’s intuition seems to be correct.”

Shouji laughs while saying so, but Ryou’s question wasn’t answered in the slightest.





## Chapter 14 – Chagrin

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“There’s hearsay about something happening in the cafeteria on Monday.” Azusa smiled while eating her lunch.

“Something being spoken about..., I’m not someone who will become the target of gossip. So what manner of hearsay is it?”

“That a man was angry, and that man was apologized to.” Ryou became disgruntled while eating his bread.

The place is the rooftop during lunch.

In this place the ones who spoke before were Azusa, Ryou then Erika, Saki is also there.

Wanting to not meet for at least a week, Ryou intended to wait for his feelings to calm down. Even when not being with her, when he closes his eyes he sees Erika’s gentle smiling face, a cheerful smiling face, a delightful smile comes to mind. Even after not meeting for two days it’s far from cooling down, and Ryou who is feeling this finds himself at a loss on what to do regarding his first love.

Because Erika and Azusa have been alternating sending invitation messages before lunch and returning home, there was a feeling of guilt at declining them, Ryou had a hunch that his feeling may be getting more heated. When Erika sent an invitation message before lunch on Wednesday, he raised a white flag in his mind and sent an affirmative reply.

At the mere sight of the name on the response message, there was a sense of it being lovely.

And though it wasn’t decorated with emojis, Erika’s plain sentence had a sense of being lovely.

Even though there was the decision to not meet for a week, it fragilely collapsed on Wednesday, his own decision, intent, is it so weak, Ryou wonders to himself as he makes his way up the stairs with a characteristic grief of a beginner in love drifting from his back.

And so, it arrived at the current time, talking with Azusa.

“Your surrounding friends are also all interesting, aren’t they?”  
Ryou looks doubtful, and says while slanting looking upwards.  
“Well, are they interesting? I only see idiots. And that ‘also’ is unnecessary.”

When Ryou says so, Saki pulls on his sleeve. Saki talking to Ryou, and Ryou talking to Saki hasn’t happened yet, Ryou’s eyes are rounded in surprise and looks at her.

When they match eyes, Saki points at Ryou’s face, not understanding the meaning of that, Ryou points at himself and a perplexed facial expression floats to the surface.

“Uhhm, what is it?”

Azusa, who is surprised at Saki’s actions to Ryou, reveals a smile towards Ryou.

“It seems she’s saying you are ‘also’ interesting.”  
“Hah!? Is, is that so...?”

Though unable to comprehend it, Ryou looks towards Saki for confirmation, Saki shakes her head. While not taking his eyes off of Saki, Ryou says in a murmur.

“...seems it’s something else, scheming glasses.”

When Ryou says so, Saki’s cheeks ballooned, and Azusa’s eyebrows twitch.

“You..., could it be what you just said was aimed at me?”  
“Eh? Ah, well, sorry. Please forget about it, it only came out by mistake.”

Azusa’s stern face became furthermore stern.

“I see now, when I’m not with you, that’s how I’m called, it’s all clear now. I’ll remember so.”  
“No, I’m sorry. Please forgive me.”

Ryou only noticed now that his verbal slip was considerably bad. When Ryou has a flustered expression while apologizing to Azusa, Saki starts to giggle.

Azusa and Ryou both have a look of surprise, Erika who had remained silent until now with her head down, looks up and vocalized her astonishment.

“Saki’s laughing! A laughing Saki is the cutest after all!!”

Erika embraced Saki while saying so. Saki who was embraced received it without resistance. Ryou who was a little envious of Saki seeing that, didn’t let it show on his face. Then Azusa who smoothed her feathers says to Ryou.

“Out of respect for Saki’s laughing, I’ll pardon you for earlier. Be careful next time.”

“O-oh... So what was the meaning from just now?”

Ryou while expressing great thanks to Saki in his innermost thoughts, questions Azusa about Saki who shook her head before.

“A little while ago, I believe it’s to say that you are more interesting.”  
Azusa says so without thinking. Ryou felt admiration for Azusa like that.  
“Really? I couldn’t comprehend it.”

Azusa shrugged her shoulders.

“We’ve been together for more than a year. Erika is the best at reading Saki’s expressions, not just skillful but also quick.”  
“Heh.”

Ryou had serious admiration for both Erika and Azusa. At the same time, he felt he had glimpse at the good relationship between the three.

Then, Azusa who is agitated looks at Ryou.

“However, it’s frustrating.”  
“What is?”

Ryou sees Azusa’s expression, and wonders if he made another verbal slip.

“Saki showing us her laugh for the first time, it took two weeks. Yet for you it was one week.”  
“No, that is, it’s because you two are here. Would she show it if it was me alone?”

Ryou, understanding it wasn't because of his mistake, while being relieved in his heart, said what he thought. But Azusa shook her head.

"It wouldn't change. For her, it's rare to laugh like that in front of people other than us. Especially in front of boys."

"Heh? Is it that unusual?"

At any rate, Ryou became aware that he was looking at something rare.

Azusa shrugged her shoulders and says.

"It's something you can be pleased about isn't it? As far as I can tell it's the first time, for Saki to like a man."

Ryou who is puzzled asked Azusa.

"There's no deeper meaning?"

"Nope. To the end, it's as a male friend."

Azusa declares so clearly.

Even if Ryou heard so, he couldn't comprehend. Why would himself be liked.

"But, what for?"

"Well..., no, I might understand, but I don't plan on saying. Don't worry about it."

"Heehh? You know why? I don't get it."

"Vaguely. But since it's not clear I won't say."

"That so."

Ryou lets out a sigh, and stopped asking further. With Ryou like that, Azusa puts away her lunch then opened her mouth.

"Now then, why have you not spoken Erika since a while ago? Your eyes haven't even met. Erika's also been like that for some time, so why haven't you spoken?"

The two who were called out by Azusa, moved at the same time.

In that way, even if the two met on the rooftop, they mutually looked away at once, and when their eyes match when glancing, immediately they look

away. The two have repeated that several times. As if such an appearance was natural, the two have not conversed. As for Erika, it seems like she forgot to open her mouth. Saki is still laughing.

Seeing the two who are noticeably in a state of unrest, Azusa suppresses letting out a smile, and looks at them with a composed expression.

Among the two who were called out, the first to raise their voice is Erika. Though she attempted to make as if nothing was up, she failed while blushing.

“Th-there’s, n-n-nothing like that. R-right?”

In addition there was great discomposure in her tone, neither Ryou or Erika noticed the unrest of the other party.

“Y-yeah, th-that’s quite right. Sch-scheming glasses, is being strange.”

The shaken Ryou once again made a verbal gaffe, Azusa’s eyebrows once again twitched. However it doesn’t seem as if Ryou noticed it. Though Azusa is looking at Ryou sharply, he doesn’t notice he is being looked at. Azusa breathed a sigh. It’s especially strange when their eyes come together, the Ryou from before didn’t seem to really pay attention to his own line of sight.

(Could it be, mutual first love...? I know it’s Erika’s first, him as well...?)

Azusa looks at the appearance of this day’s Ryou and Erika, and that Ryou has fallen in love with Erika is clearly understood, then why the invitations from yesterday and the day before declined, isn’t understood. However, it was guessed to be trouble over his first love.

Though she slightly couldn’t understand that feeling, the plan is on schedule and is proceeding as it should, she chuckled in her mind.

Halting her thoughts, her eyes return to the two, the same things are happening again. When their gazes match, they look away in a hurry, when they glance, and it comes together, they avert their sights. All while being silent.

What to do now, Azusa sighs in her heart, come to think of it, that she hasn’t taken photos or videos of the current Erika is recalled, taking out her phone, she began to record a video. This time it’s not only Erika, but was taken at

an angle that the two of them were in it. While taking it Azusa looks to Saki, when Saki's eyes line up with Azusa she understands Azusa's intention and takes out her own phone to start taking photos.

If it was the usual Ryou and a camera was pointed at him, he would notice even if it's from behind him, but now all his attention is going towards the girl who is his first love, so he wasn't aware.

Because all attention is on the man who is her first love, Erika also doesn't notice it.

After Azusa is finished taking an approximately five minute video, she put away her phone and calls out to Ryou.

"Sakuragi-kun, lunch time will end soon, if we're not going to go together, shouldn't you start going down?"

Ryou who is taken aback confirms so with his watch, and stands up in a rush.

"That's right. Well then, I'll be leaving ahead."

Taken aback by Ryou's words, Erika suddenly called out.  
"Sakuragi-kun."

By reflex Ryou's eyes met with Erika's, immediately pointing his gaze downwards he asked.

"What is it?"

While also facing downwards, Erika said right away.

"Today, I would like to return together..."

Hearing what Erika said, Ryou's attention was shifted, the red faced Erika who spoke so with her eyes downcast was excessively cute, almost involuntarily replying with 'fine' Ryou quickly suppressed his mouth, and swallowed his words which were about to be said.

Erika looks up at Ryou who wasn't saying anything, and spoke timidly. Naturally with upturned eyes.  
"Is today no good...?"

Feeling as if his heart was being gripped tightly Ryou, he takes his eyes off of Erika, and said without pausing.  
"It's bad, I have to rush to my part time job. Well, see you."

Saying so, he turned around and retreated from the rooftop.

Erika who saw Ryou off lets out a big sigh. Azusa puts her hand on Erika's shoulders and gently says to her.

"You only have to invite him again."

"That's right..., when I think about finally seeing him again, but couldn't talk at all... haa."

To Erika who once again sighs heavily, Azusa says.

"Do your best Erika. You'll be able to speak normally right away."

Erika shook her head.

"What to do..., Sakuragi-kun's appearance was also somewhat strange."

From Erika's few words, Azusa can tell that Erika has not noticed Ryou's feelings. Perhaps, it can be said that Ryou has not noticed Erika's feelings as well (That's more or less understandable in regards for a man to think that the school's idol is in love with him, would be greatly conceited). Thinking about what can be done, this time it's Azusa who lets out a big sigh.

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## Chapter 15 – Complex?

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This chapter was a bit confusing. Basically it starts on Thursday the week after the previous chapter and has a lengthy flashback to the previous Saturday in the middle.

“You alright? Ryou.”

When Ryou sits down on his seat, Shouji turned around and asked him with a worried voice.

“I’m fine, just a bit sleep deprived.”

Ryou answered while waving his hand as if to say there’s no reason to worry.

Bags could clearly be seen under Ryou’s eyes.

“Even if you say it’s fine... Are you sleeping properly? Were you doing something in the middle of the night?”

Ryou has a somewhat disheartened face while answering Shouji’s enquiry.

“Ah, my part time job. I ended up being late due to a little blunder.”

“Due to a little..., really, your job ignores the Labor Standards Act. Hasn’t it been every night recently? What time did you return home?”

“3AM.”

Shouji is popeyed from surprise.

“Ryou..., you need to resign from that sort of job.”

“I think so as well..., but you’re not going to ask.”

Shouji then curiously asks Ryou.

“What’s that?”

“What kind of part time job would make a high school student work until such a time. What kind of work it is.”

Shouji shrugs his shoulders.



“Even if I ask, I don’t think you’ll answer.”

Ryou gives a small laugh in reply.

“Oh well.”

Shouji who felt likewise shrugs his shoulders.

In that case it’s no use even if I ask. I’ll hear it when you say it.”

“Well, I’ll talk about it someday.”

Shouji says doubtfully.

“Really?”

Ryou laughs while shrugging his shoulders.

“Who knows?”

When Ryou says so, the two look each other in the eyes and laugh.

Ryou then said to Shouji with a smile.

“Well, those like you who don’t pry are nice guys.”

“That’s how it is.”

While saying so, Shouji turns around and begins to read a magazine on top of his desk.

Seeing that, Ryou takes his phone out of his pocket and lets out a small sigh. As would be expected, am I working too much, he absentmindedly thinks so. Ryou has been putting in so much at work to prevent himself from thinking about Erika, when returning from work, he ends up thinking about it after all, and as a result his sleeping time has shortened.

Why did he fall in love, Ryou began to be troubled the other day. Early morning after working all night on Saturday, he still had work on Sunday that night as well, he started to think that his sleepiness isn’t helping in regards to his problem. Why, if he understands why he is on love he can calm his feelings and calming down would be helpful.

Is it because he was attracted to her face, but Ryou doesn’t think that’s enough for him to fall in love. At any rate, walls were put up in his heart as caution for such feelings.

He reflects on when his feelings first started to change. Without any doubt, it was the previous Sunday on the day of their date. Then, when on that day did he change, thinking about it, it was probably around the time of the

lunch, he can say with conviction. Anyhow, it was thought that he couldn't eat it anymore 'a boxed lunch with a taste resembling a mother's' when eating it he shed tears by mistake.

That time, without a doubt some part of his heart's walls were torn down, Ryou conjectures. Then, was it that time? He asks himself, but feels it's a little different. Then was it when we hugged afterwards? He feels that is also wrong. Was it the time he slept on her lap? Thinking to that extent, why in the first place had he fallen asleep so quickly, Ryou wonders. While looking puzzled he ponders over that day.

Lying down and receiving a lap pillow, when closing his eyes after deciding on a direction to face, the impression coming from the touch was strangely relaxing. Why was it so relaxing? .....Even thinking about it he couldn't understand. Eyes closed, he briskly scratches his head, various faces of Erika flow by.

A troubled face, smiling face, laughing face, a face teary-eyed from laughing and the like, at the same time as they flow by in his head his chest throbs, it couldn't be stopped. And then, the face of Erika smiling gently flowed by, Ryou's felt his heart thump heavily.

Ryou who is at a loss puts his hand on his chest to suppress his heart, when he once again calls to mind Erika's gentle smiling face, his heart beat similarly again. Is it this? He thinks recalling that face. His heart throbs as if to say 'Correct! Correct', ah, I fell in love when I saw this face, Ryou was able to come to a conclusion on since when he had fallen in love.

Ryou who finally found his answer let a breath in relief, so what now that I understand? He was troubled for a moment, when seeing her face, when recalling it, if my heart doesn't throb like that would it mean my feelings have calmed down? While thinking so he recalls Erika's face while becoming accustomed to his heartbeat.

While shutting his eyes, after about 30 seconds he looks puzzled.  
(Resembles somebody.....? No, is it not the face but the atmosphere.....?)

After worrying about that for a few seconds, Ryou opens his eyes.  
"It resembles mother's atmosphere.....!"

Muttering to himself, everything is understood at once.

What it all comes down to, for Ryou the cooking was like a mother's taste, that is to say 'taste of a mother's cooking' is what broke down his heart's wall, his mind was made to settled own due to the atmosphere being similar

to a mother's, he came to fall in love seeing her smile gently with an atmosphere like a mother's.

The instant he understood, Ryou suddenly stands up.

"I'm not a mother-con!!"

While saying so he bangs his head on a wall.

Anyway, Ryou has understood the cause for being in love with Erika, but doesn't want to understand it.

After understanding, same as some time ago, he thinks to try and become accustomed to it, when picturing Erika's face, this time her face is completely clad in the atmosphere of a mother, the throbbing of his heart becomes awful, Ryou despairs at the mother complex hidden in himself. I absolutely never was a mother-con, while telling himself many times, his feeling for Erika show no signs of cooling down, he gives up on his efforts to calm them. The only salvation for Ryou this time is that Erika and his mother's face don't resemble each other's in the slightest.

Trouble concerning the results, after having his sleeping time reduced he feels are inflexible, causing the situation to be the worst it can be, Ryou goes to bed in a bad mood.

Ryou who recalls the vicious cycle of that day mocks himself.

The previous week he ended up meeting up with them on Wednesday, three days after making his decision, and Friday. However, this week Ryou worked hard.

This week he declined invitation on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Tuesday was only to return home, Wednesday was only for lunch, all were declined.

The energy required to decline the invitations from the girl he likes surprised Ryou.

For the lunch break invitation he says he is tired from his part time job and is sleeping in the classroom and he has to go home quickly to get to his part time job, he cuts them off like that. Due to those not being lies his mind could be at ease.

Furthermore, perhaps he should confess and get rejected, he thinks so but then he might not be able to see her smiling face anymore. Then if responding only to lunch breaks, there may not be any problems when it comes to them. But then it would be difficult to continue to decline returning home together, so Ryou declines both.

He ponders so about these invitations, after end-of-day homeroom on this Thursday that an invitation message never came. He feels relieved in not having to decline a message from Erika, but at the same time when thinking about last week and today being the first time, Ryou came to be lonelier than he thought he would. He was angry with himself who was so self-centered.

Sighing, Ryou holds his anger in check, today let's return slowly along the backstreet, he decides. Because there was no invitation, those three are unlikely to return through there (Ryou believes they will return along the main street), Erika certainly won't return along the backstreet, it was said before. Just how much of what Ryou said was heard, is something he doesn't know.

When those at Ryou's part time job saw him, he was given a day off in consideration so today is a day off. When it was discovered that Ryou constantly had bags under his eyes, he was forcibly given a rest day, my present appearance seem to be very bad, Ryou mocks himself again.

What on earth should be done in the current situation, as a beginner in love Ryou doesn't know what to do.  
The only thing he knows is that returning home together should be avoided.

Going back a little to the rooftop during lunch, Erika, Azusa and Saki have finished eating and are talking.

Erika with a depressed looking face says a few words.

"Am I being avoided..."

Azusa's face becomes troubled.

"It his work, didn't he say he is tired because of it?"  
"Yes, but for this whole week..."

When Erika says so while sighing, Saki said in a low voice.  
“But, he really seemed to be tired.”

Erika is surprised at Saki knowing such a thing.

“Really? How do you know?”

“Today, I saw him in the hallway by chance. There were bags under his eyes.”

Erika shows a little relief on her face because of Saki’s words, but at the same time worried about Ryou.

“Is it alright to have such a hectic part time job?”

Azusa who recalls something says.

“That reminds me, I haven’t previously heard him say anything about his job. Have you heard anything more than that?”

Erika shakes her head.

“I haven’t heard. I haven’t asked.”

Knitting her eyebrows Azusa says while looking at the sky.

“Next time, let’s not ask, be slow.”

Erika who sees Azusa’s state has a cold sweat stream down.

“In, in moderation...”

For a moment Azusa smiles nihilistically, instantly returning her face she said.

“However, interesting isn’t it..., because we said we wouldn’t come to the classroom, he can keep refusing this way by saying he is tired.”

Erika nods while feeling a little down.

“That’s so, returning today will also be declined.....”

Azusa seeing Erika not being lively pains her heart, simultaneously she is wondering about Ryou. There should be no mistake that Ryou likes Erika, why then won't he see her. Even though Ryou has fallen in love as Azusa planned, what has happened since then has been completely unplanned. Ryou has always said he doesn't want to stand out, he declined returning, so for the sake of his friend's not suspecting something it can be thought that he is declining lunch break invitations, but for some reason it is felt it isn't that.

For the sake of not standing out he only has to decline invitations, to think so can be considered pointless, if the three grandly approach Ryou it would attract attention, Azusa by herself is making a plan, for today Ryou's thoughts need to be made clear, there's no meaning if that is used. (If Ryou is aware he would complain)

Azusa who was thinking so with her arms folded looks up and said.

"Let's meet and talk."

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## Chapter 16 – Rank Up

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The moment Ryou entered the backstreet, he almost turned around. Before turning the corner he noticed there was someone around there, and when he went around the corner his eyes opened wide their face. Erika, Azusa and Saki see Ryou who is approaching. Azusa laughs while grinning and says to Ryou.

“Long time no see.”

Ryou sighs with half-opened eyes.

“Is that how it is? I don’t think it can be called a long time.”

Azusa frowns slightly to Ryou’s question.

“That’s a disreputable thing to say. We’ve been waiting for you.”

While Ryou is thinking about what to say, Erika in a somewhat reserved manner asks Ryou.

“Can we return together?”

Ryou’s head started to ache. He did his best in order to avoid returning together, yet this situation came to be.

Generally it would be too unnatural to decline in this situation, above all when they have such a close relation. Ryou has also understood at this time that the energy required to personally decline in front of Erika would be more than doing it by message.

Ryou, realizing that he can’t decline, lets out a large sigh in resignation inside his heart and answers while smiling wryly.

“It’s fine.”

Erika who is delighted lets out a large breath of relief.

(We were smiling last week, now it’s this this expression...)

Ryou finally realizes here that him declining has hurt Erika’s feelings, and hated himself. At the same time as entering that self-loathing, he thinks about how Erika could be considering him to be close to herself, and the throbbing in his chest couldn’t be stopped.

The situation he wanted to avoid has come. Ryou believes that the situation he is most uneasy about has about a one in a hundred chance of happening. However, in the case of that one in a hundred, such a thing usually comes along abruptly but Ryou will try to avoid it all.

But now that things have come to this, he decided to enjoy returning with the first love girl before his eyes; Ryou is surprised at the speed which his feelings changed.

“My bad, I’ve declined your invitations for a while.”

Ryou apologetically said so to Erika.

“It’s okay, looking at your face I can understand you really are tired.”

Erika waves her hand in a fluster in response to Ryou’s words.

“Ah, this.”

While smiling wryly from what Erika said, he indicates to the bags under his eyes.

“Yeah, hey, is your body alright?”

Erika asks Ryou in a voice filled with sincere worry. With Erika’s worry being transmitted to Ryou, he had feeling of guilt though it doesn’t show on his face, he waved his hand laughingly.

“It’s alright, merely a lack of sleep. Today’s a day off from my job so I can return slowly.”

Hearing so, Erika has an appearance of relief and smiles gently.

“That so, then today is a slow rest day.”

(Seeing her like this, as I thought they don’t look alike...)

Ryou looks at Erika’s smiling face, his heart jumps with a similar sensation as when it was the two of them on that Sunday, he quickly puts his hand on his chest to settle its stirrings. Though he tried to look away from Erika, it wasn’t possible and Erika saw it.

When Erika looks curiously at Ryou, who abruptly moved his hand to his chest, their eyes came together. Erika also feels her heart throbbing and couldn’t divert her eyes away from Ryou, naturally it became that the two had locked eyes, after several seconds had passed, Azusa raised her voice.

“Ah, hello.”



The Ryou and Erika duo simultaneously turned their heads towards Azusa while startled.

“Wh-what is it?

“Wh-what?”

Azusa who is fed up looks at them with unamused eyes and said to the two.

“I would like it if you don’t forget that we are here as well.”

While saying so, Azusa pulls in Saki.

Saki nods while they look at the two of them.

“Wh-what are you saying, it’s nothing like I forgot.”

“A-ah, I didn’t forget.”

The two blush while saying so, what was she worrying about, Azusa puts her hand on her forehead. However what she must do today hasn’t changed, Azusa instructs herself, putting her hand back down she says.

“Anyways, let’s not stand here forever and go.”

“Th-that’s right.”

“Yeah, let’s go.”

The two with their faces still red agree with Azusa, lining up they began to walk.

The four had been walking for several minutes, when the strange air had disappeared, Azusa said to Erika.

“Erika, can you walk on ahead with Saki for a bit?”

Ryou once again strengthened his wariness.

Erika turns her head towards Azusa and says in a suspicious voice.

“Again?”

Azusa says with a cool face.

“Don’t worry, we won’t flip your skirt again.”

Azusa’s words cause Erika’s face to go red, quickly moving her neck she looks at Ryou, with speed not losing to Erika’s, Ryou looks away to the sky.

Ryou who looked away to the sky holds his nose with his hand. Before it was ‘a panty shot of a cute girl’ now that memory is ‘a panty shot of the girl he likes’, it’s a rank up. After being self-aware that he like her, to remember that would be somewhat discourteous due to the felling similar to immorality he hadn’t recalled it (but it wasn’t forgotten).

Naturally because of Azusa’s words Ryou instantly recalled it and thought his nose might bleed from stimulation.

To Ryou who is trying to make absolutely no eye contact, the red faced Erika looks at him with somewhat stern eyes, next she glares at Azusa.

“I only want to speak with Sakuragi-kun for a little.”

Being glared at, Azusa without a break in her cool face she said so to Erika.

Pouting to such an Azusa, Erika links arms with Saki and walks on ahead without saying anything.

Azusa, who finds Erika’s appearance amusing, looks at her from behind with a smile.

When Erika is walking along, Ryou breathes a sigh of relief and finally brought his eyes down. Azusa calls out to him at the same time.

“Calmed down?”

“.....What?”

While making an unnaturally surprised appearance, Azusa says to Ryou.

“Were you not stimulated remembering about the panty shot of the girl you like?”

Reflexively positioning his hand on his forehead, Ryou speaks while groaning.

“.....You, that way of talking..., wait, what’s with the ‘like’?”

In the middle of saying that Ryou turns to Azusa.

Without a change in expression, Azusa says.

“If you think it shouldn’t be exposed then you should conceal it, but shouldn’t you take care of yourself a bit more?”

“...What’s this about?”

“That’s all, I could understand these futile actions even if I was growing senile you know?”

Ryou breathes out with a bitter look on his face.

“Don’t worry, I won’t say anything to Erika.”

Ryou looks at Azusa. Azusa looks at Ryou.

“...So then, talk.”

Ryou spoke first.

Without averting her glance, Azusa looks straight ahead to Ryou.

“Why are you avoiding Erika?”

Ryou was at a loss for an instant but immediately opened his mouth.

“.....it’s not avoiding...”

Azusa interrupts Ryou’s words halfway.

“Lie.”

“What? I thought I said I was tired from work, to call that avoiding...”

“It’s different.”

“...What’s different?”

“It’s not that you’re too tired from your part time job to meet us. As a reason not to see us, in order to avoid us did you not put in time at work?”

This woman’s an esper, Ryou thought.

“.....That’s merely speculation. First of all, what do I have to avoid? Because I don’t want to stand out, I don’t want to meet up with you guys, did I not already say so?”

Azusa nodded with a serious face.

“I understand that. You’re not a man who breaks his promises often, is what I think.”

Ryou smiled bitterly.

“I feel like I’ve received a high evaluation..., then, what is the reason you think I’m avoiding you guys?”

“Us, no, rather it should be said that Erika is being avoided.”

“...Why’s that?”

“Because you like Erika? Don’t deny it now, or the talk won’t advance.”

Roughly scratching his head, Ryou silently affirms so.

“I believe it likely due to that Sunday when you went out with Erika afterwards it reached the point where you were conscious of her in that way. Anyway, it was clearly reflected on your face on Wednesday.”

Ryou again, by reflex puts his hand on his forehead and says groaningly.

“...Was it so clear...?”

“It was. You would have to be greatly thickheaded to not notice that despite your appearance.”

Azusa’s expression doesn’t break at all while saying so.

Ryou with his hand still on his forehead looks up to the sky.

“Seriously...”

Azusa says with a slight laugh.

“Don’t worry, Erika didn’t notice. Though Saki did.”

“Perhaps, she’s slow?”

Azusa shakes her head while saying.

"No, it was both at that time."

"Huh?"

Ryou who found that slightly hard to follow lets out that voice.

So that Ryou doesn't hear, Azusa says in a small voice, "You were also at that time", but Ryou seemed to have heard it.

"What was that now?"

"No, it's nothing. So I understood you were conscious of Erika on Wednesday. But I don't understand from there."

"What of it?"

"Usually, if you're invited by the girl you like, I think you would go to meet that girl at any cost. Monday, Tuesday, I understand you wanting to give priority to your male acquaintances over being with Erika. But by Thursday during lunch it could be perceived that you were avoiding meeting us for two consecutive days, you also declining every single invitation to return together is strange isn't it."

"There was my work..."

"That's true to some extent. However, what's with the frequency you have refused the invitation from the girl you like last week and this week? That's the point which is plenty peculiar, they're refused then refused, even if it's out of a sense of guilt, would you not want to see the girl you like when lunch break starts, or show your face a little just before it ends, even if there are words of apology don't you think it's strange?"

"....."

"You said you wanted us not to come to the classroom, and we are following that. In order to meet up with you, or so that you can see Erika, there's only lunchbreak, returning home and days off isn't it. Even I consider how you're thinking, there some unusual contradicts. Don't you think it's not strange to consider that you're 'avoiding'?"

When saying so, Azusa faces towards Ryou looking up to him, Ryou doesn't avert from the eyes which are looking at himself.

"I'll ask again. Why are you avoiding Erika?"

What should Ryou say, he was at a loss on that. Though it would be easy to lie, now, he is hesitating to lie to the girl in front of his eyes. Nevertheless to tell the truth, he doesn't want to do such a thing, even if he says it, those words won't be believed, also to say such a thing would be unpleasant. Perhaps it wouldn't become something like that with the girl before him. However, if he says 'that was the me of that time' how would he come to be seen, when thinking so he started dreading it. When he thought about that dread, Azusa didn't miss the little shake in Ryou's eyes.

"There seems to be some circumstances as to why you're avoiding us. Though I don't know what kind of circumstances it is, If possible I wish for you talk to talk to me about it so we can resolve it together. If you keep avoiding so, then your close friends will be hurt more. More than that, I don't want to see her be sad. If you can't say, if you say you'll be avoiding Erika after this, then please say you won't be meeting up with her anymore. Think about it for the sake of the girl you like. If you have a half-hearted attitude then it's Erika who will hurt the most."

After Azusa finishes saying so, Ryou absentmindedly thinks about his own self-centeredness, partway through realizing something, Ryou looks up to Azusa and says.

"Hey, judging from your way of speaking, it's as if..."

Before Ryou could finish speaking Erika came back running with Saki calling out to him in a loud voice.

Erika who reached Ryou is out of breath but says to him in a hurry.

"Sakuragi-kun! There's a fight in the plaza over there! There's people from our school and another school!"

Ryou felt a cold sweat running down his back. Did the one in a hundred come.

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## Chapter 17 – Name

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“How many are there?”

Ryou asks Erika while jogging towards her.

“Three from our school, six from the other school.”

Hearing Erika’s words, Ryou’s feet come to halt.

“Three? Six? ...Are they all men?”

Erika, while surprised at Ryou who suddenly stopped, answers his question.

“Y-yeah. They’re all men...”

Ryou has an openly relieved face, while flicking his hands he says to Erika.

“What. Then just leave them.”

With the exception of Ryou, huh? the others are hardened with their mouth opened.

“Wa-wait a minute. You’re not going to help them?”

Erika who had seen what was happening is in a hurry, having recovered she quickly asked Ryou.

Ryou, nods his head as if to say that’s how it is.

“Ah, they’re men? A man’s quarrel is their own trouble.”

“Bu-but there’s twice as many people!”

“If you pick a fight there, then it’s their responsibility. Besides, who says that the three are going to lose?”

“No, the three from our school, they’re hurt and surrounded!”

“Fuun? Then isn’t it already over?”

Hearing that the three are surrounded, Ryou's complexion doesn't even change, Erika who is getting irritated latches onto his arm and pulls him.

"A-anyway, come quickly!"

"Fine then."

In a corner of the plaza, three people who have fallen down are enclosed by six people, the surrounding six seem to be cheerful as the three are kicked repeatedly.

"They're going at it~"

Ryou spoke in carefree manner while watching the plaza from behind cover. That sort of Ryou has his arm gripped and shaken by Erika as she appeals.

"Please, help them!"

Erika's words makes Ryou show a troubled face, when he is about to open his mouth to explain, Azusa talks before him.

"Erika! Those three, they're from our class!"

"Eh!?"

What Azusa said surprises Erika, immediately she looked at the plaza again.

"You're right! It's Okamoto-kun, Yoshida-kun and Kudou-kun!"

Azusa and Saki seem to feel sick seeing someone they're acquainted with bleeding and their faces are a little pale.

"Yes, on that morning some time ago, they're the three who suddenly confessed to Erika."

Azusa's words made Ryou think there was even less necessity to help them. Erika's grips Ryou's arm tighter.

"Hey, please! Save them! They're my classmates!"

Ryou then says to Erika while being troubled.



“It’ll be over soon. Isn’t fine to just take them to the hospital after that?”  
But it’s better if you go earlier!”  
“It’s alright. For such an injury, one, two weeks of rest is enough to get well.”

Erika is astonished at how coldhearted Ryou’s words were. She knows Ryou to be a gentle person, but the person before her eyes now doesn’t even try to help a human being who is being hurt in a fight. Is the person she came to like such a cold person, while Erika is in shock Azusa lets out her voice.

“Sakuragi-kun, though I don’t know why you won’t help them, I ask you, won’t you save them?”

Amazed at Azusa’s words, Ryou says to her.

“You...just now, are you aware you’re telling me to go pick a fight with six people by myself?”

Erika and Azusa at this point, realize they’re asking for a selfish thing which could put Ryou in danger.

“That’s right! But isn’t it alright if it’s Sakuragi-kun? That time when you saved me...”

“That time with you was three people, this time it’s six. By simple calculation it’s twice as many, but the degree of difficulty it isn’t only doubled.”

Ryou calmly points that out to Erika who is at a loss, Azusa says.

“I think you’ll be okay. I don’t have a strong basis for it, but I think it’s possible in your case, I think that’s the reason I as well as Erika are asking you.”

Erika nods greatly to Azusa’s words, and behind Erika is Saki who is nodding many times.

Eyes with such unconditional confidence are thrown out to Ryou, he scratches his head briskly with a troubled face. Looking at his appearance of not going, Azusa believes that if she herself goes then Ryou will also follow, facing towards the plaza she said.

“Then, I’ll go, its fine if you come in afterwards.”

Popeyed from surprise, Ryou grabs Azusa’s arm.

“That’s a stupid thing to say. If you go, what do you think will happen?”

While trying to shake off Ryou’s hand, Azusa makes a resentful face.

“As for this, I...”

“Is it aikido? But with your arms, after throwing down one or two people, even if you’re cautious you’ll be caught and just end up as a hostage.”

Ryou interrupts what Azusa was going to say, though her face was stiffened wither mouth open, she let out her doubts.

“H-how, that’s...”

Ryou doesn’t reply to Azusa’s question, separating his hand, as he was about to open his mouth to give a reason for not helping them, Erika runs past Ryou’s side, startled he grabs Erika’s hand.

“Let go! I’m not asking Sakuragi-kun now! I must stop this!”

Erika’s face is red and she looks reproachfully at Ryou through teary eyes.

“You’re being foolish. Look at those guys, do you think they’ll stop if you ask? You’ll be captured.”

“I said that I will do that! They’re being injured!”

“Therefore...”

“Enough already! Let go!!”

Perhaps because of Ryou’s carelessness, or because it’s the hand of the girl he likes, Ryou was grabbing weakly so as not to hurt her, Erika shook Ryou’s hand off and started running.

Surprised, Ryou clenches his hand which separated, and calls out to Erika to stop.

“Wait! Erika!”

‘Wait’ is it a reaction to that word, or because of not being able to go against Ryou’s words, or that for the first time the one she like called out her name,

Erika came to a stop. Ryou promptly takes Erika's hand, pulling her towards himself, he says unpleasantly.

"You being injured in front of my eyes isn't something I can allow."

Erika looks at Ryou absentmindedly. Looking over Erika who's like that, Ryou turns back to Azusa and pushes Erika towards her.

"Azusa, hold onto Erika tightly. I'll go so you three go home before me."

For an instant, Azusa has a taken aback appearance, noticing the meaning of Ryou's words, she quickly said.

"Wait for a moment, are you going alone? You can't do it alone..."

Before Azusa finished talking Ryou said.

"I never said a single word that I can't handle six opponents."

"No, however..."

Ryou interrupts Azusa's words.

"It's fine, so go home. Saki, Erika and Azusa, return ahead of me."

Shifting her attention to Saki, Saki nods and grabs Erika's and Azusa's hands. When Ryou sees Saki's actions, he pats Saki's head while smiling, bending a little to match Saki's height, he said.

"Good, absolutely don't allow the two to come towards me."

Was it pleasant being patted, Saki's eyes are partly closed, hearing Ryou's words, her face became earnest and nodded.

Erika and Azusa were staring in wonder while looking at the two. Ryou turned to Erika.

"Erika."

"Yes!"

Surprised at her name being called, Erika answered like a student called by a teacher.

Ryou says with a serious face.

“It’s fine. I’ll go, so don’t wait and return home. Please return, okay?”

Erika strangely couldn’t act against what Ryou said, and nods.

“Then, I’m off.”

Even if Ryou says so, the three’s legs weren’t quite moving. With a trouble face Ryou says to them.

“If you don’t return quickly, I won’t help them.”

Taken aback by Ryou’s words, the three started to run. While running, Erika looked back to Ryou several times.

Ryou makes sure the three were running, then takes off his non-prescription glasses, sighing greatly, he scratches his head, he starts running to this group fight, or rather bullying by six people against the three they’ve enclosed.

Without a disturbance in his breath, Ryou stops his legs just before the bullying and calmly calls out to the group.

“You guys, stop it.”

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## Chapter 18 – Pray

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The three, who were told by Ryou to go home, naturally didn't do so, and are watching the plaza from a different spot, hiding themselves while breathing roughly.

"Why do you think we were told to return ahead?"

Azusa asks Erika.

"Maybe to not involve us. When he helped me before he gestured with his hand for me to get away."

When Erika answered so, Azusa says with a face as if she couldn't comprehend.

"But if that's the case why did he say to go home, and not to go hide ourselves?"

"That's right..., I wonder why. Anyway, I can't leave Sakuragi-kun alone and go home. I just nodded without being able to disobey."

Azusa and Saki nod in agreement to what Erika said.

"Sakuragi-kun, will he be okay?"

When Erika says so worryingly, Azusa then says after thinking a little.

"It'll be... alright, I think. Perhaps, he is stronger than I believe. Perhaps he'll have a have a hard time..., perhaps get a little hurt..., I think it'll be alright."

"..Hearing you say it like that doesn't make think it'll be completely fine. ...Ah, please, don't get seriously injured."

Erika unites both hands together while saying so, when she closes her eyes, Saki grips Erika's sleeve while pointing towards the plaza.

Erika shifts her attention; Ryou is standing in front of the group.

At this late point Erika becomes afraid, and her hand started to tremble.

When seeing someone you know confront large group of people like that,

seeing the difference in the number of people is frightening, even though she was in a hurry, this is what she requested, only realizing this now, she could feel her face going pale. Why had she thought him to be coldhearted, it's finally understood that he was the only one who was calmly looking at the situation. Erika glances at Azusa, her face is similarly becoming pale, it's likely that she is having similar reflections, Erika thought.

Her lips are trembling. Praying that he is unhurt, she smiles to herself. She thinks she probably was too brazen to ask that of him, and if she didn't do that then he wouldn't have gone in.

At least, if he falls and cannot move, she'll go to help no matter what. Erika looks with such an attitude, she sees six people who are frenzied moving towards Ryou, Erika holds down her scream which almost leaked wither hand.

However, without one minute passing, Erika moves away her hand which was holding down her mouth, and in what is not fitting for a high school girl, she let out a stupid voice. The three were the same.

""Ha?""

Erika couldn't believe what she just saw, is what she saw really reality, closing her eyes she reproduces what she just saw.

Ryou stands in front of the group, the six people who are called turn around and all stared at Ryou.

"What, bastard? You a friend of these guys?"

The first person in front of Ryou is a man with long dyed brown hair whose face made him seem to be stupid (Ryou's assessment) who said so to Ryou, Ryou shakes his head.

"Nope. However I do go to the same school as these guys, that's all it is so how about letting them go."

The six who heard Ryou's words let out coarse laughter. The man of the six who is in the middle then says to Ryou.

"What, you came to help when they're not your friends? Pretty cool aren't you."

When saying so, the six laugh together again. Why do such dimwits laugh together like that, Ryou is thinking so. The man who is in front again opens his mouth.

“Really, cool isn’t he. But isn’t it tiresome to stand on your legs when you’re cowering in fear?”

The six are going, cool, cool, as if making fun of him while laughing and clapping.

As for Ryou, why must I keep company with such idiots, while having a headache he opens his mouth.

“You’re praising me, thanks. While you’re praising me how about I take those three.”

Ryou pays attention to the three and says so, the three are conscious and absentmindedly look at Ryou.

The six’s faces become a little stern, and the man on the right says.

“These guys are lame. This three make me sick. You don’t seem to be frightened, want to play?”

An unpleasant smile floats on the six, and several voices of consent are given.

Ryou conceals the amazement on his face, and said.

“Wait a minute. A person with much effort, is trying to negotiate peacefully with their mouth... are you seriously short tempered? Well?”

Thereupon the six unanimously raised voices of anger.

“What you say, bastard!!”

“You dare say that so arrogantly!!”

“I’ll kill you!!”

After all, do negotiations not work with this kind of people, Ryou breathes out a large sigh in resignation. After speaking with these idiots, a few minutes have passed so if those three miraculously listened to what Ryou

said, then they shouldn't be in the vicinity anymore. Thinking they've returned, Ryou believes is wishful thinking at best, he raises both hands.

"My bad, my bad, but it's natural to get mad when idiots make fun of me. I also think what you said was stupid. N...? Ah, sorry, I was a bit short tempered when I said so. Sorry, my true opinions leaked out."

Ryou calmly says with a given-up pose, some from the six people's faces are reddened while slightly shaking, glaring at Ryou, before long on of them shouts at Ryou.

"Die!!!"

With those words they simultaneously move towards Ryou.

It can't be helped if they're Erika's classmates, this should prevent them from further injury, the largest kindness Ryou can give to those three men came to mind, and he turned his attention to the six.

Among the six, the front most man is an amateur who is holding up his hands, the moment he entered into the range of Ryou's kick, the edge of Ryou's right foot strikes the man's stomach at a speed he couldn't see, the man is blown off diagonally to the right so he doesn't knock into the three. Next is the man by Ryou's right side, before he notices that his friend has been blown off, Ryou kicks the ground to chase after the man who was blown off, and standing in front of the man who was previously to Ryou's right, the object this time is to not let the three people be behind this man, the man in front's stomach is kicked as is, and is sent flying.

For an instant the two men were simultaneously in the air, with some time difference the two crash into the ground. But before the first man crashes into the ground, Ryou kicks the ground, landing diagonally with his left foot in front of the man in the middle of the six, without losing the momentum from his movement, his right foot moves to the left side in a roundhouse kicks.

In an instant the three remaining lost sight of Ryou, paying more attention to his movements, it was already after three had been kicked. Ryou isn't flustered being in the center of the three remaining people, moving a short distance, again without losing momentum he kicks the man in front flying. The men to the right and left recognize that after Ryou had kicked the man in front of him, though startled the hold up their hands, Ryou promptly changes his posture and roundhouse kicks the man to the right with his



right foot, the man who was to the left, with his feet as is, is blown off with a right foot spinning back roundhouse kick.

Six men are crouching on the ground in agony while collapsed. Ten seconds haven't passed since Ryou's first kick. They haven't fainted due to Ryou adjusting himself to the degree where they won't.

The three who were helped have vacant and absentminded faces. It's understandable, before their eyes, in an instant Ryou brought down the men who were assaulting them. Additionally the three couldn't see the entire process of them being defeated. Were they hit or kicked. Thinking about it, when Ryou moved a little, someone went flying. It's natural since Ryou was moving like a shadow, the first kick was sudden sending one of them flying, when they noticed noticing Ryou was across from them, it was already after he had kicked for the second time. Looking towards Ryou after the second person was in the air, Ryou who they thought would be there, was already gone, hearing the sound of a strike from the side, when turning their face, Ryou wasn't in that spot again, and a person was in the air. Though incomprehensible, again they heard the sound of strikes, when shifting the attention that way, was the figure of Ryou who had done a back kick.

In other words, they had only seen the figure of him kicking two people, how the others were defeated wasn't seen, when they became aware, the six people who were assaulting them were crouching on the ground.

Ryou confirms that the six haven't fainted, he turns towards the rescued three who are looking at himself with dull faces, he points his chin towards the way back and said.

"Go."

"Eh?"

Among the three is man with a relatively good physique, thanks to that he thinks the damage to not be too bad, that man raises his doubts.

"I said to go home. Because I'll clean this up."

The good physique man, Okamoto, has a facial expression implying he has question, suddenly, his attention shifts to Ryou's breast pocket, the blue color confirms that he is in the same year as himself, and his eyes opens widely.

“S-same year student...?”

Ryou loudly clicks his tongue to Okamoto’s response, and said.

“Oi, don’t look for me at school. Don’t tell anybody about today. Since I saved you, can you listen to what I said?”

Ryou says so threateningly, Okamoto nodded many times.

“Good, then take those two, and quickly go home.”

“Y-yes... o-oi, Yoshida, Kudou, can you stand?”

The three have wounds over their faces, Yoshida had difficulty walking, but fortunately was able to stand up, the three began to walk while supporting with their shoulders.

Ryou called out to the backs of the three who had begun walking.

“Oi, don’t walk this way anymore. And absolutely follow what I said just now.”

The three go, sorry, thank you, many times while bowing their faces and returned.

Making sure that the three had gone, one of the six had recovered a little from his damage, seemingly able to talk, he glared at Ryou.

“Bastard, what did you do. What the hell are you?”

Ryou almost spurted out.

“What’s there to see, no matter how you look at it I’m a normal high school student. All that can be said is that I kicked you.”

“Heh, it’s like that. I remember the faces of those three from just now, I’ve memorized you face as well.”

“...What are you saying?”

“I’m saying that we will get revenge, on you. And those three from just now. How about hurting us more while we’re like this? However, that just means we will have more and more revenge!! Hahahahahahaha!!!”

“Let’s hear this... why those three as well?”

“Because they’re your friends! Hahahaha!”

“I said before that they’re not my friends.”

“Relations don’t matter, as long as they’re your acquaintance is reason enough to be hit by us.”

When the man says so, all six raise their voices laughing. Apparently, all members have recovered enough to laugh.

After all it became like this, Ryou lets out a large sigh, scratching his head briskly.

Ryou closed his eyes and prayed. That those three girls had gone home. Perhaps he thinks that to be impossible or at least returned the moment the six people hit the floor.

For the sake of not looking at him after this.

Ryou stops praying, staring at the six he closes his eyes. Then the six began to laugh.

“What, are you scared of us getting revenge.”

“If you cry and beg us we might just sto~op.”

“Later, we’ll get ten more and herd up you and those three.”

“Ahahahaha.”

Ryou gnashes his molars.

—————These pieces of shit

Ryou felt his anger increases.

—————I’m convinced

Ryou gathered murderous intent.

—————These guys are people who should be killed

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## Chapter 19 – ○○ > △△ > □□

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When Ryou opens his eyes, the men stop their wild laughter and look at Ryou with wide open eyes.

At the same time, they couldn't help but feel cold, and held their own body with their hands.

Why, did they feel cold. Was it from their own bodies trembling.

Why, were they trembling. Why, couldn't they make a sound. They convinced themselves it must be cold.

Why, is their waist planted down. Though other reasons were looked for, none could be found.

With the exception that the man in front of their eyes is certainly going to kill them.

Ryou's conscious mind is almost entirely hardened with the urge to kill, he puts out the maximum thirst for blood he personally can. Though the strong thirst for blood is only approaching, it's enough to incite the image of them being killed.

The men feel cold from Ryou's thirst for blood sweeping over them, there's the sound of their teeth chattering, their pain is forgotten, it's not possible to stand, they can only shrink away with their eyes opened wide.

Ryou's eyes are dark with little reason in them, looking to the men in front of him, he speak

"Oi."

"Hi-hii."

A man lets out a pitiful sound, moving his hands to be even a little more away from Ryou, trying to draw back, the man's body doesn't move because of his excessively shaking hands.

"What, will, be done, to me?"

The forcibly awoken killing intent, is about to snatch away Ryou's last reasoning, he is trying with all his might that his little bit of reasoning isn't squashed by his killing intent, and the words being emitted are little.

The man called by Ryou isn't as hurt as the others, for the man in front of him who he spoke those words to, in his life, without a doubt felt the most regret.

"S-s-s-sorry!!"

The man called out to forcibly moves his trembling mouth, somehow making words of apology.

The eyes of Ryou who was apologized to doesn't change, is puzzled.

"Why, apologize? Will you, retaliate, me, and those, three?"

"W-we won't! A-absolutely! Y-you, and those three!!"

"Why, not? Ah, that's right."

When saying so, Ryou's mouth widens slightly, the men hold their breath waiting for Ryou's words.

"Now, you can, die, here."

The six men themselves have no doubt they'll be killed by this man, immediately after feeling that, Ryou strikes his own face with his right hand and a clear sound could be heard.

The men look at Ryou in wonder.

Ryou lowers his right hand, breathing out a little, and breathing in greatly, doing so once again, he then says to the men.

"If you don't want to die, disappear from here at once. Don't enter my field of vision again. Those three as well."

Seeing his reasoning growing stronger, the six muster their strength and stood up.

Having not heard a response, Ryou glares at the six and said.

“Do you understand?”

The six jump up from surprise, while saying “Sorry” “Absolutely won’t approach” “Thank you”, they forcibly move their trembling legs to run away. Their saying “Thank you” is gratitude in regards to their own life.

Thinking it was finished, Ryou closes his eyes and raises his face upwards to the sky.

The spontaneously boiling up urge to kill, if he moved his body to break his target it would mostly be relieved. However, he only threatened, since he didn’t move his body which was contrary to his forcibly awakened killing intent, it is difficult to suppress.

—————Calm down, calm sown

Ryou is looking up to the sky with his eyes closed, repeatedly taking deep breaths in and out slowly, he is trying to circulate his killing intent back to his former nature.

When his killing intent had halved and he had circulated back to his former nature, the signs of three girls were felt from behind.  
(Ah, didn’t return after all....., it’s finished with this.)

Since killing intent and anger remain, there was little sadness at present. While thinking off what is to come after this, without turning around, without opening his eyes, Ryou spoke.

“I’m sure, it was said to go, on home ahead.”

Due to putting his strength into subduing his killing intent even If it’s a little, his voice came out phrase by phrase.

With only their presence, Ryou understood that the three held their breaths for a moment.

“As the ones who asked, we can’t be the only ones to go home. You didn’t seem to have been injured, are you alright?”

Ryou hears the voice of the girl he likes, thinking of what will happen afterwards, his heart pained.

“Well, I didn’t seriously think you would return. Returning was just my wish...”

Ryou’s words have a sound of self-mockery.

“Sakuragi-kun, you haven’t turned this way. As it is, we can’t apologize or express our thanks.”

Ryou hears Azusa’s voice, he began to recall that on the way there was talk on why Erika is being avoided. It’s not necessary to conceal it any more, Ryou thinks so, in that case we should speak, he slowly opens his eyes and turns around.

When matching eyes with Ryou, Erika’s eyes open wide, Azusa’s upper body reflexively draws back and Saki absentmindedly falling on her backside was seen.

Each of three show their surprise differently, but what the three had in common was the fear in their eyes.

While Ryou calms his thirst for blood which hadn’t settled, he slowly shifts his attention to Azusa and opens his mouth to Azusa who stirs a little.

“What, now you’re avoiding me.”

When Ryou speaks, Erika looks at Azusa puzzled, Azusa, with a small jolt as if to reprimand her trembling throat, and nods slightly.

“E-eh”

With a self-mocking smile, Ryou spreads both hands while saying.

“It’s because I wanted to avoid this. Encountering such a situation, I will be seen like now, and like you now, I am seen with eyes of fear, from tomorrow I will be looked away from, it’s because I didn’t want to see you run away from me. Therefore I avoided this.”

Ryou lowers his hand at the same time his mouth is shut, looking at Azusa.

“T-that’s...”

As for what Ryou just said, Azusa tried to raise her voice in rebuttal, but thought whether she could really argue against Ryou's words, thinking so, her voice became low and disappeared. The painful reason why Ryou avoided Erika is understood. Not wanting to be seen with eyes of fear from the person you like as it is now. Therefore, at the same time as Ryou came to like Erika, he avoided going home with Erika. Because he doesn't want to encounter the situation he felt uneasy about, he avoided the time of being together as much as possible.

Ryou smile wryly at Azusa's appearance, it can told she's stumped. Though he has the same smiling face as always, the cold thirst for blood still blowing changes it into an icy image.

"I can't blame you in particular. Being seen by such eyes, is because my control is bad. ...But, I am still a kid. It does hurt a little. Especially..."

While saying so, Ryou looks at Erika. When their eyes meet, Erika looks straight Ryou.

Though Ryou didn't continue what he was saying, Azusa and Saki both understood at once what Ryou wanted to say. He doesn't want the girl he like to be frightened looking at him.

Shaking off that thought, Ryou takes his eyes off of Erika, matching eyes with Azusa, he shrugs his shoulders and said.

"Well, it ends half-baked like this. I guess the ending can't be helped. From tomorrow, no more meeting or keeping in contact. Isn't it mutually better that way? Well then, catch your breath and go home."

Ryou turns his head while saying to the road he goes home on, and his legs move forward.

(It's finished....., it was fairly enjoyable, the four of us eating on the rooftop... well, it's fine. It's only returning to how it was before. Not being able to control my own thirst for blood is bad).

As Ryou walks slowly while in self-derision, he realized that someone is running. That someone passes Ryou's side, and stands in front of him.

Erika is standing there a little out of breath.

Ryou is staring in amazement and surprise at Erika who appeared before his eyes.



When Erika looks in irritation at Ryou being like that, her right palm made a large motion.

“Stop joking around!”

A splendid slap from Erika hits Ryou’s left cheek. Ryou is surprised as he thought Erika wouldn’t be able to move due to his own bloodlust, had run up in front of him, as for dodging the slap, he forgot to, and so Erika’s slap was received.

Ryou is dumbfounded by the sudden action of Erika, when looking at her, this time her left palm was moving. From her expression it’s obvious to see she’s angry.

“What’s with this mutual!!”

Ryou is dumbfounded again, and can’t move. A scorching pain ran through his right cheek, Ryou still remains dumbfounded.

Erika right hand again went into motion. Here at last Ryou noticed he was about to be hit again, but couldn’t move for some reason.

“You don’t know a person’s nature!!!”

An impact runs through his left cheek. Realizing he is being hit, Ryou’s head finally started to move, though a little painful, he is about to say something to Erika, Erika’s left hand is seen moving again, startled, he should dodge, though he thought so, he somehow wasn’t able to.

“Selfish...!”

A scorching pain ran through the right cheek again. When about to let out a small voice through the pain to pacify Erika’s anger, again, he’s startled.

Erika’s body bends a little, while lifting up her right leg. What is Erika going to do, Ryou who understands so calls out in a panic.

“Hey, wai...”

“Don’t speak!!!”

In the middle of Ryou opening his mouth, Erika’s front kick hits directly into Ryou’s abdomen with a \*thud\* noise, with breath leaking from his mouth, Ryou’s body is bent into a < character. Though it was possible to avoid, avoiding her unskillful kick would make Erika fall down, Ryou received the

kick while thinking so.  
(What, that's..., tights isn't it!)

The skirt of Erika who raised her leg highly flutters magnificently, the contents were seen clearly, but disappointingly it wasn't like the underwear from before. Ryou, who doesn't want to be hit further, raises his voice in a hurry."

"Wa-wait a minute!"  
"What!"

Erika draws near, shouting with a look of anger.  
Though Ryou is puzzled at Erika's anger, he asks something he's been wondering about just now.

"Y-you, aren't scared of me!?"  
"It was scary!"

To Ryou's question, Erika shouts with a face as if to say that's natural.  
To Erika's answer, Ryou felt a sense of incongruity.

"Was...? Then, now...?"  
"It's anger!!"  
"Ah..., yea, that so."

Being pressured by her force, Ryou holds up both hands to restrain Erika's anger while nodding.

"But, there's more than that!"

"And, while saying that with the same angry look as before, Erika starts to put her hand in her blazer pocket, Ryou looks at Erika's left hand lured by her hand's movements, blood is seen sticking to that hand, Ryou quickly grips Erika's hand.

"Ah, you, that's blood isn't it. When were you hurt!? You alright!? Could it be, those guys..."

Ryou thinks that those six did something to Erika while running away, the anger seems to be boiling up again, Erika has a shocked appearance.

“You didn’t notice after all? This is your blood. Here.”

Ryou’s right cheek is pointed at while saying so. Tempted by that, Ryou touches his own cheek, and he understands afterwards that blood is coming from his mouth.

“Eh? ...Ah..., that time.”

While looking at the blood on his hand, he thinks of the cause of the blood, when threatening the six people, he felt his own reasoning was about to disappear, to bring back the disappearing reasoning, he recalls hitting his own cheek.

Erika frowns at Ryou who has that sort of appearance.

“Look up a bit, I’ll wipe it.”

“A-ah...”

When Ryou looks up as was told, a handkerchief is taken out of her pocket, and began to wipe from Ryou’s mouth to the scruff of his neck. Because of Erika’s eyes which were upset before, Ryou behaves himself until Erika finishes wiping.

After Erika finishes wiping, a sigh is let out.

“There doesn’t seem to be any injuries, I was worried because there was blood when you turned around.”

“Worried...?”

The meaning of Erika’s word ‘worried’ isn’t understood well by Ryou, such a feeling, he murmurs the word he heard. Erika looks at Ryou inquisitively.

“Is it strange to worry?”

Though what Erika said isn’t strange, Ryou found it something hard to understand.

“N-no...? My mind was quite unexpectedly struck... no it’s nothing. Apart from that, were you scared of me just now...?”

Ryou was about to point that although she was worried he was very much unusually hit, being glared at with a strength like nothing before, he stopped talking.

"I was, dealing with six people alone then getting angry with what was said..., when I saw your eyes, for a moment, I thought you were seriously going to kill them."

Erika, when falling silent, said so looking at Ryou's eyes.

"Th-then, why..., is I'm seen as scary..., wouldn't you want to avoid and not see me?"

While Ryou says so he has a pain in his chest and his voice almost trembled. However, Erika who is shocked at Ryou's words said.

"What are you saying? Even if I say I'm scared, isn't that just one aspect of you?"

"...One aspect?"

"Yes, anyone can become scary when they're angry."

"Th-that's certainly true..."

Compared to the amount of bloodthirst another person puts out when angry, it's entirely different. To say it's just one aspect, Ryou doesn't believe the girl before him.

"The scary Sakuragi-kun from just now isn't everything. The Sakuragi-kun I know is interesting and somewhat strange, and as for your number one essence, when you saw the blood and thought that I was injured you were worried immediately, aren't you gentle like that?"

"....."

Thinking himself to not be so gentle, Ryou stays silent.

"You certainly were scary earlier. But, leaving that aside, when I saw you were bleeding, I was worried."

Erika shakes her head while saying she was worried. Ryou felt that he finally began to understand what Erika said.

"Scared... but... was worried...?"

Ryou cautiously examines Erika while asking so.

"Yes. And I am angry now. ...Then, what!? Do you not want to meet anymore!?"

Erika nods from Ryou's words, suddenly, with the same anger as just now, she says so drawing near to Ryou.

Erika's words turn around inside Ryou's head, they are heard numerous

times again.

Rather than hearing it again, he asks again.

“Well...eh? ...Scared... but also worried...?”

“That’s how it is, I’ve said so since a while ago! So what’s with the not meeting anymore!?”

Erika answers Ryou’s question while agitated, feeling he can be let off depending on his answer, she presses Ryou.

But Ryou isn’t flustered from Erika’s appearance, while looking steadily at Erika, he carefully thinks about the meaning of the words Erika said.

Scared, but worried.

Scared, worried.

That is, fear was felt from Ryou’s thirst for blood, Ryou’s blood was seen, that fear was painted over with worry.

Putting aside the thought of possibly being killed, she was worried that the man in front of her was bleeding.

When such a thing has come to be understood, Ryou puts his hand on his forehead, closes his eyes and looks up to the sky.

(Amazing, this girl....., an amiable child)

The thing which Ryou was most afraid of, he thought it might have passed. The girl before him, when she sees him tomorrow, she probably won’t look away because of fright, and won’t avoid him. His own thirst for blood is regarded as merely one aspect of him to the girl in front of him. The girl before him has the kindness to ignore his own thirst for blood. Anger was displayed regarding not meeting up with him. Tomorrow, in the same way as up to now, she will look for him. That that’s how it is, Ryou finally understood.

“Hey! Why’re you silent!? Answer my question!!”

(Again resembling a mother....., come to think of it that that threatening attitude is similar to the times when my mother was angry)

From Erika’s tone, the day when the two were together was recalled.

With Ryou being silent and not saying anything, Erika is about to shout when she sees Ryou being silent with a stern look, Ryou starts to tremble slightly.

Erika looks puzzled at Ryou, letting out a sound, Ryou then starts to laugh with a face showing he can't endure it. Erika looks at Ryou in astonishment which turned into anger at once.

“Hey, now you're laughing!!”

Ryou laughter doesn't stop even if Erika is shouting. As if his body is hurting, he began to laugh while bending down.  
Erika is at a loss for words.

“Love, it's amazing.....”

Being dumbfounded in silence looking at Ryou and Erika, Azusa shakes her head while muttering so to Saki who's on the ground next to her.

“Yea.....”

Though Saki says so in small voice, it's filled with strong emotions.

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## Chapter 20 – Sound

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Ryou's laughter seems to have become stronger; it becomes impossible to stand, groveling on the ground, his breath becomes strained while beating the ground with his hand, the laughter giving the impression of it being from the bottom of the heart.

The bewildered Erika couldn't ignore it before long and once again shouts at Ryou with an angered look.

"What is this! You've been laughing for a while!!"

Ryou has tears in the corners of his eyes, whether it's from excessive laughter or joy isn't known. While trying to subdue his laughter, he stands up and wipes his eyes, turning towards Erika he says while catching his breath.

"Ah, sorry..., uh, \*cough cough\*...un, sorry."

Erika frowns looking at Ryou as he finally catches his breath.

"Why did you suddenly laugh? Are you making a fool of me?"

When Erika cross-examines him, Ryou becomes speechless for a moment, shortly afterwards he says laughingly.

"Nope, I just fell in love again."

"Eh?"

This time Erika becomes speechless from Ryou's words.

When Ryou looks at Erika making such a face, her face quickly becomes bright red and a perplexed voice is heard from Erika.

"Th-that's...?"

Gazing at Erika's changing facial expressions with interest, Ryou stretches his hand out placing it on top of Erika's head and says.

“Wait a moment.”

After saying so, Ryou then says in a slightly large voice to reach Azusa and Saki.

“I want to go over there, is it alright?”

Erika shows a perplexed appearance to Ryou who doesn't answer her, while touching her head with both hands confirming she is being touched, lured by Ryou's words she shifts her attention to Azusa and Saki and them nodding strongly was seen.

Having asked whether it's alright to go, their fear might be remembered if Ryou approaches. Ryou who has confirmed the two's acknowledgement, slowly approaches the two and stretches his hand out to Saki who is still on her bottom.

“Are you hurt?”

With no hesitation Saki takes Ryou's hand to stand up while shaking her head. Ryou leaks a breath of relief from Saki's answer, then turned to Azusa who is knitting her eyebrows in displeasure looking at Ryou. Seeing Azusa like that, Ryou's face becomes awkward and lowers his head.

“You were afraid, my bad.”

Azusa lets out a sigh and says while shaking her head.

“Before receiving your apology, please receive ours. This was the result of us asking you to take action so I shouldn't have looked at you like that. I'm sorry, please forgive me.”

Azusa lowers her head when saying so. Saki seizes Ryou's sleeve looking upwards and said to Ryou in a clear voice.

“I'm sorry.”

Ryou has a stumped look from the two's apology, and said while scratching his head.



“No, I think such a reaction is natural. Rather, I thought your reactions were weak. I wouldn’t be surprised if you were more frightened.”

Azusa shakes her head while it’s still lowered and said.

“Nonetheless, the fact that your feelings are hurt doesn’t change. Please receive my apology.”

Saki looking up at Ryou strengthens the grip on his sleeve. Ryou has a face that can’t quite be described and says.

“I’ve received it so raise your head. And so, I’ll apologize once more.”

Azusa lifts her head because of Ryou’s words, waiting for the continuation of his words. Saki is still gripping his sleeve.

“I arbitrarily decided by myself that everything with you guys would end...”

While saying so, Ryou looks at Azusa and Saki’s eyes in turn then says.  
“Forgive me.”

Saki nods towards Ryou, Azusa as well.

“It really is as you said, you were about to go away quickly... Well, I can’t really retort since I wasn’t able to chase after. Let’s call it even.”

Ryou leaks a breath of relief and cautiously asked.

“That’s so. Is it alright now? Not afraid to face me...”

Azusa and Saki look at each other in mutual puzzlement and laughs lightly.

“It disappeared completely after seeing your and Erika’s exchange... Haven’t you noticed?”

Ryou asked again curiously because of Azusa’s words.

“What’s that?”

“Some time ago, when we faced each other even an inexperienced eye can see that the killing intent has completely disappeared.”

Ryou is a little surprised from Azusa's words, probing his own body he confirmed his killing intent certainly has disappeared. He thought there would still be 30 minutes left, why, when, Ryou starts to think about what Azusa said.

"Do you understand when it disappeared?"

"No, I don't"

Azusa laughs lightly to Ryou's answer and says.

"It's the time you were hit by Erika."

Ryou's eyes are widened as he touches his cheek.

"Right, that time, with the slap's sound it completely disappeared. The chill that was felt even with your back turned instantly disappeared with the sound of Erika's slap. Erika's slap to the face is awfully strong and carries a warm air."

Ryou absentmindedly opens his mouth, when looking at Saki, Saki also has the same opinion and nods. When the understanding reaches Ryou, he once again burst into laughter.

"Ha, hahahahaha...! Fufu..., what a woman..."

Azusa with a mischievous face asks Ryou.

"Did you fall in love again?"

Ryou is amazed from Azusa's words then smiled.

"That's right."

When Ryou says so, the three had a similar face and laughed. It's not Azusa's usual nihilistic laugh, Saki also raises a small voice.

Erika looking at those three can't wait in silence and said to those three.

"Hey! Till when are you going to leave me out!?"

Ryou laughs while turning to Erika and says.

"Our bad. There wasn't any intent to leave you out. Please wait just a little more."

Ryou's words make Erika show a sulky appearance and she turns to the side.

Azusa looks at Erika's state, smiling, she suddenly noticing something and said to Ryou.

“By the way Sakuragi-kun...”

Ryou who is called out to turns towards Azusa and interrupts her words saying.

“Ryou is fine.”

“Eh?”

When Azusa asks again about Ryou’s sudden words, he seems to be embarrassed, turning to the side he said while shrugging his shoulders.

“Because my friends call me Ryou..., Ryou is fine.”

Ryou looks at Azusa and Saki and said so. Azusa eyes instantly round from Ryou’s words, and at once said mischievously.

“Then, we have become your friend.”

Still embarrassed, Ryou says while scratching his cheek.

“Well..., from tomorrow you should avoid me if I make you frightened.”

Azusa shows a bit of an amazed appearance.

“What? Do you intend to often show such a dangerous presence?”

Ryou said in a panic.

“No way! This is the second time it was seen from someone from school.”

“Second? Ah..., so... no, it’s fine. Leaving that aside, if a dangerous sign is shown again we just have to make Erika stop it.”

Azusa says so in a voice of thinking a little, in the end she smiles impishly, such an Azusa sees Ryou glancing Erika and laughed a little.

“That’s so. Well, I’ll be sure not to... Didn’t you start to say something just now?”

Ryou who recalled so in the middle of talking, Azusa laughs a little and says.

“It’s the same thing. Won’t you call us by our name?”

“Heh?”

When Ryou has face wondering what the story is, Erika who can’t stay silent any longer suddenly says to Ryou.

“Yeah! A while ago you called my name, what, do you want to go back!?”

Hearing what Erika said, Ryou turns to Azusa who nods.

“That’s right. A bit ago..., before going to help those three you abruptly changed into another person, all of us were called by our name..., don’t you remember?”

While hearing what Azusa said, Ryou looks puzzled, when Ryou heard what Azusa asks him.

“You three’s names? First names? Me, I said so?”

When asked, the three nod towards Ryou, taken aback he looks puzzled.

“Ah... I was in a hurry, at that moment it might have become like that...”  
“Th-then, won’t you use our names anymore?”

Erika asked while impatient from Ryou’s words, Ryou shook his head.

“No. Not any longer, such a thing is only...”  
“Then, call me by name! It’s usual for me, it’s not only you calling me so!!!”

When Erika says so with a desperate appearance, Ryou says while scratching his cheek.

“No, it’s not particularly that..., it’s habit...”

Azusa frowns at Ryou and says.

“Do you intend to not use the names of your friends? I don’t know if it’s habit but I’ll say it once, call us by our name after this.”

Erika and Saki both nod to Azusa’s words. Ryou shrugs his shoulders.

“I got it. I’ll keep it in mind.”

Erika’s face suddenly lightens up and she asks Ryou.

“Hey, and me?”  
“What is it?”  
“Is it fine to also call you by your name? As friends!”

With Erika’s words, Ryou makes eye contact with Azusa and Saki, the three smile wryly, Ryou shakes his head and says to Erika.

“That’s unpleasant.”

Erika’s face becomes shocked and approaches Ryou.

“Why!? Why is my using your name unpleasant!?”

While smiling wryly, Ryou suppresses Erika with both hands.

“It’s different. The name is fine. That’s not unpleasant.”

“Eh?”

Erika has a perplexed look. Ryou is troubled looking at Erika like that and starts talking.

“It’s the friend part.”

“Err...? Is it..., being friend’s with me is unpleasant!?”

Erika looks further perplexed, in the middle of talking she becomes anxious.

Ryou smile wryly to such an Erika.

Azusa and Saki look at the two in interest.

“Well, that’s so... no, I don’t dislike it!”

Little by little tears form in Erika’s eyes because of Ryou’s words, Ryou then said so in a panic.

“Then, what...?”

Erika with moist eyes asks Ryou.

“Before explaining it, something must be said before.”

“...?”

Erika silently looks puzzled at Ryou.

“A while ago... about not meeting up anymore, avoiding and not contacting me, when I said so...”

Erika suddenly interrupts Ryou’s words.

“That’s right! I forgot! What was that!? I’m disliked after all...”

Ryou shakes his head and says.

“It’s different. Please forget it.”

“Eh?”

“Not meeting, avoiding, not contacting, when that was said..., do you not want to hear why I decided that?”

“Why you suddenly said that...?”

“Yea.”

“Okay... why did you say such a thing?”

Though reluctant, Erika answered in the affirmative, wanting to hear the reason for what Ryou said. Ryou has a look of embarrassment from Erika’s enquiry.

"I was afraid..., from tomorrow you would look away, thinking I would be avoided..., therefore I said we wouldn't meet anymore."

When Erika hears Ryou's words, she glares at Ryou with a severe face.

"Was, it said, I would look away?"

"No."

"Avoiding, was it said?"

"No."

"Not wanting to meet, were those words said?"

"It wasn't."

Three times, Ryou denies Erika's questions. Erika looks downwards and falls silent, in a complete change she says with a forceful tone.

"Twice you decided such a thing, don't say such selfish things!!"

"I won't say..., please forgive me."

When Ryou apologizes, Erika controls her anger and regains her breath, looking up at Ryou she says.

"Understood... So what did you mean earlier about disliking it?"

The worry in Erika's eyes can't be covered up. Ryou smiles wryly seeing that.

"I intend to say it clearly... It's unpleasant to only be friends..."

Erika reaches the point of frowning from being perplexed, Azusa called out to Erika.

"Erika, after he said that just now, hasn't it come to this?"

Erika looks up diagonally, thinking for a little bit, suddenly startled, she looks down with her face reddening. Ryou is amused by Erika's change and says teasingly.

"Understand?"

Erika recalls the 'falling in love again' words and her face becomes bright red, her line of vision moves around restlessly, muttering.

"Err..., eh? But....."

Ryou holds the shoulders of Erika who is looking away turning her towards him, Erika's eyes are looked into and he said.

“I, like you Erika.”

Erika's eyes become rounded and her red face becomes redder. At first delight is felt from being called by name, from the word 'like' she can't help but advance into happiness. The present happiness can't be believed, Erika instinctively grabs the arm of Ryou who's holding her own shoulders and asks.

“Re-really...?”

Seeing Erika looking upwards with moist eyes it might make his waist collapse, he nods with a serious face.

“Really.”

Tears overflow from Erika's eyes, lines of tears flowing.

Ryou is at a loss with the crying Erika, for some reason his hand is put up to catch the tears before it fell from Erika's cheek. Ryou notices that his left hand is on Erika's shoulder and his right hand on Erika's cheek.

When Erika realizes Ryou's hand is on her cheek, though a little surprised, her hand is put on Ryou's hand and she looks up at him.

“I like you as well.”

Though Ryou thought it would be so from what Azusa said, he is amazed hearing Erika say it clearly, becoming red, he can't help but be filled with a sense of joy.

And so only the girl in front of him is seen, looking at Erika's eyes, Erika also looking at Ryou's eyes.

Feeling his heart pounding, Ryou thinks the sound of his own heart can be heard by Erika.

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## **Credits**

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## **Web Novel Sources**

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<http://moonbunnycafe.com/b-group-no-shounen/>

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